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Muriel held him to her like a mother soothing a nightmare-ridden child. "Listen!" he whispered.

THE VOICE FROM THE PAST

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

At the ancient and historic public-school which stands a mile or two up the river from the Angler's Rest there had recently been a change of headmasters, and our little group in the bar-parlour, naturally interested, was discussing the new appointment.

A grizzled Tankard of Stout frankly viewed it with concern.

"Benger!" he exclaimed. "Fancy making Benger a headmaster."

"He has a fine record."

"Yes, but, dash it, he was at school with me."

"One lives these things down in time," we urged.

The Tankard said we had missed his point, which was that he could remember young Scrubby Benger in an Eton collar with jam on it, getting properly cursed by the mathematics beak for bringing white mice into the form-room.

"He was a small, fat kid with a pink face," proceeded the Tankard. "I met him again only last July, and he looked just the same. I can't see him as a headmaster. I thought they had to be a hundred years old and seven feet high, with eyes of flame, and long, white beards. To me, a headmaster has always been a sort of blend of Epstein's Genesis and something out of the Book of Revelations."

Mr. Mulliner smiled tolerantly.

"You left school at an early age, I imagine?"

"Sixteen. I had to go into business."

"Exactly," said Mr. Mulliner, nodding sagely. "You completed your school career, in other words, before the age at which a boy, coming into personal relationship with the man up top, learns to regard him as a guide, philosopher, and friend. The result is that you are suffering from the well-known Headmaster Fixation or Phobia—precisely as my nephew Sacheverell did. A rather delicate youth, he was removed by his parents from Harborough College shortly after his fifteenth birthday and educated at home by a private tutor; and I have frequently heard him assert that the Rev. J. G. Smethurst, the ruling spirit of Harborough, was a man who chewed broken bottles and devoured his young."

"I strongly suspected my headmaster of conducting human sacrifices behind the fives-courts at the time of the full moon," said the Tankard.

"Men like yourself and my nephew Sacheverell, who leave school early," said Mr. Mulliner, "never wholly lose these poetic boyish fancies. All their lives the phobia persists. And sometimes this has curious results—as in the case of my nephew Sacheverell."

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

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The Voice From the Past

IT was to the terror inspired by his old headmaster (said Mr. Mulliner) that I always attributed my nephew Sacheverell's extraordinary mildness and timidity. A nervous boy, the years seemed to bring him no store of self-confidence. By the time he arrived at man's estate, he belonged definitely to the class of humanity which never gets a seat on an Underground train, and is ill at ease in the presence of butlers, traffic policemen, and female assistants in post-offices. He was the sort of young fellow at whom people laugh when the waiter speaks to them in French.

And this was particularly unfortunate, as he had recently become secretly affianced to Muriel, only daughter of Lieut.-Colonel Sir Redvers Branksome, one of the old-school type of Squire and as tough an egg as ever said "Yoicks" to a foxhound. He had met her while she was on a visit to an aunt in London, and had endeared himself to her partly by his modest and diffident demeanour and partly by doing tricks with a bit of string, an art at which he was highly proficient.

Muriel was one of those hearty, breezy girls who abound in the hunting counties of England. Brought up all her life among confident young men who wore gaiters and smacked them with riding-crops, she had always yearned subconsciously for something different; and Sacheverell's shy, mild, shrinking personality seemed to wake the maternal in her. He was so weak, so helpless, that her heart went out to him. Friendship speedily ripened into love, with the result that one afternoon my nephew found himself definitely engaged and faced with the prospect of breaking the news to the old folks at home.

"And if you think you've got a picnic ahead of you," said Muriel, "forget it. Father's a gorilla. I remember when I was engaged to my cousin Bernard——"

"When you were what to your what?" gasped Sacheverell.

"Oh, yes," said the girl. "Didn't I tell you? I was engaged once to my cousin Bernard, but I broke it off because he tried to boss me. A little too much of the dominant male there was about old B., and I handed him his hat. Though we're still good friends. But what I was saying was that Bernard used to gulp like a seal and stand on one leg when Father came along. And he's in the Guards. That just shows you. However, we'll start the thing going. I'll get you down to the Towers for a week-end, and we'll see what happens."

If Muriel had hoped that a mutual esteem would spring up between her father and her betrothed during this week-end visit, she was doomed to disappointment. The thing was a failure from the start. Sacheverell's host did him extremely well, giving him the star guest-room, the Blue Suite, and bringing out the oldest port for his benefit, but it was plain that he thought little of the young man. The Colonel's subjects were Sheep (in sickness and in health), Manure, Wheat, Mangel-wurzels, Huntin', Shootin', and Fishin'; while Sacheverell was at his best on Proust, the Russian Ballet, Japanese prints, and the Influence of James Joyce on the Younger Bloomsbury novelists. There was no fusion between these men's souls. Colonel Branksome did not actually bite Sacheverell in the leg, but when you had said that you had said everything.

Muriel was deeply concerned.

"I'll tell you what it is, Dogface," she said, as she was seeing her loved one to his train on the Monday, "we've got off on the wrong foot. The male parent may have loved you at sight, but, if he did, he took another look and changed his mind."

"I fear we were not exactly *en rapport*," sighed Sacheverell. "Apart from the fact that the mere look of him gave me a strange sinking feeling, my conversation seemed to bore him."

"You didn't talk about the right things."

"I couldn't. I know so little of mangel-wurzels. Manure is a sealed book to me."

"Just what I'm driving at," said Muriel. "And all that must be altered. Before you spring the tidings on Father, there will have to be a lot of careful preliminary top-dressing of the soil, if you follow what I mean. By the time the bell goes for the second round, and old Dangerous Dan McGrew comes out of his corner at you, breathing fire, you must have acquired a good working knowledge of Scientific Agriculture. That'll tickle him pink."

"But how?"

"I'll tell you how. I was reading a magazine the other day, and there was an advertisement in it of a Correspondence School which teaches practically everything. You put a cross against the course you want to take and clip out the coupon and bung it in, and they do the rest. I suppose they send you pamphlets and things. So the moment you get back to London, look up this advertisement, and write to these people, and tell them to shoot the works."

Sacheverell pondered this advice during the railway journey, and the more he pondered it the more clearly did he see how excellent it was. It offered the solution to all his troubles. There was no doubt whatever that the bad impression he had made on Colonel Branksome was due chiefly to his ignorance of the latter's pet subjects. If he were in a position to throw off a good

"Stop clicking your tongue," said Sacheverell, banging the desk forcefully. "I came here to be explained to, not clicked at."

thing from time to time on Guano or the Influence of Dip on the Younger Leicestershire Sheep, Muriel's father would unquestionably view him with a far kindlier eye.

He lost no time in clipping out the coupon and forwarding it with a covering cheque to the address given in the advertisement. And two days later a bulky package arrived, and he settled down to an intensive course of study.

By the time Sacheverell had mastered the first six lessons, a feeling of perplexity had begun to steal over him. He knew nothing, of course, of the methods of Correspondence Schools and was prepared to put his trust blindly in his unseen tutor; but it did strike him as odd that a course on Scientific Agriculture should have absolutely no mention of Scientific Agriculture in it. Though admittedly a child in these matters, he had supposed that that was one of the topics on which the thing would have touched.

But such was not the case. The lessons contained a great deal of advice about deep breathing and regular exercise, and cold baths, and Yogis, and the training of the mind, but on the subject of Scientific Agriculture they were vague and elusive. They simply would not come to the point. They said nothing about Sheep, nothing about

Manure, and from the way they avoided Mangel-wurzels you might have thought they considered these wholesome vegetables almost improper.

At first, Sacheverell accepted this meekly, as he accepted everything in life. But gradually, as his reading progressed, a strange sensation of annoyance began to grip him. He found himself chafing a good deal, particularly in the mornings. And when the seventh lesson arrived and still there was this absurd coyness on the part of his instructors to come to grips with Scientific Agriculture, he decided to put up with it no longer. He was enraged. These people, he considered, were deliberately horns-woggling him. He resolved to go round and see them and put it to them straight that he was not the sort of man to be trifled with.

THE headquarters of the Leave-It-To-Us Correspondence School were in a large building off Kingsway. Sacheverell, passing through the front door like an East wind, found himself confronted by a small boy with a cold and supercilious eye.

"Yes?" said the boy, with deep suspicion. He seemed to be a lad who distrusted his fellow-men and attributed the worst motives to their actions.

Sacheverell pointed curtly to a door on which was the legend: "Jno B. Philbrick, Mgr."

"I wish to see Jno B. Philbrick, Mgr," he said.

The boy's lip curled contemptuously. He appeared to be on the point of treating the application with silent disdain. Then he vouchsafed a single, scornful word.

"Can'tseeMr.Philbrickwithoutanappointment," he said.

A few weeks before, a rebuff like this would have sent Sacheverell stumbling blushfully out of the place, tripping over his feet. But now he merely brushed the child aside like a feather and strode to the inner office.

A bald-headed man with a walrus moustache was seated at the desk.

"Jno Philbrick?" said Sacheverell brusquely.

"That is my name."

"Then listen to me, Philbrick," said Sacheverell. "I paid fifteen guineas in advance for a course on Scientific Agriculture. I have here the seven lessons which you have sent me to date. And if you can find a single word in them that has anything even remotely to do with Scientific Agriculture, I will eat my hat—and yours, too."

The manager had produced a pair of spectacles and through them was gazing at the mass of literature which Sacheverell had hurled before him. He raised his eyebrows and clicked his tongue.

"Stop clicking!" said Sacheverell. "I came here to be explained to, not clicked at."

"Dear me!" said the manager. "How very curious."

Sacheverell banged the desk forcefully.

"Philbrick," he shouted, "do not evade the issue. It is not curious. It is scandalous, monstrous, disgraceful, and I intend to take very strong steps. I shall give this outrage the widest and most pitiless publicity, and spare no effort to make a complete *exposé*."

The manager held up a deprecating hand.

"Please!" he begged. "I appreciate your indignation, Mr. . . . Mulliner? Thank you . . . I appreciate your indignation, Mr. Mulliner. I sympathize with your concern. But I can assure you that there has been no desire to deceive. Merely an unfortunate blunder on the part of our clerical staff, who shall be severely reprimanded. What has happened is that the wrong course has been sent to you."

Sacheverell's righteous wrath cooled a little.

"Oh!" he said, somewhat mollified. "I see. The wrong course, eh?"

"The wrong course," said Mr. Philbrick. "And," he went on, with a sly glance at his visitor, "I think you will agree with me that such immediate results are a striking testimony to the efficacy of our system."

Sacheverell was puzzled.

"Results?" he said. "How do you mean, results?"

The manager smiled genially.

"What you have been studying for the past few weeks, Mr. Mulliner," he said, "is our course on 'How to Acquire Complete Self-Confidence and an Iron Will.'"

A STRANGE elation filled Sacheverell Mulliner's bosom as he left the offices of the Correspondence School. It is always a relief to have a mystery solved which has been vexing one for any considerable time; and what Jno Philbrick had told him made several puzzling things clear. For quite a little while he had been aware that a change had taken place in his relationship to the world about him. He recalled taxi-cabmen whom he had looked in the eye and made to wilt; intrusive pedestrians to whom he had refused to yield an inch of the pavement, where formerly he would have stepped meekly aside. These episodes had perplexed him at the time, but now everything was explained.

But what principally pleased him was the thought that he was now relieved of the tedious necessity of making a study

of Scientific Agriculture, a subject from which his artist soul had always revolted. Obviously, a man with a will as iron as his would be merely wasting time boning up a lot of dull facts simply with the view of pleasing Sir Redvers Branksome. Sir Redvers Branksome, felt Sacheverell, would jolly well take him as he was, and like it.

He anticipated no trouble from that quarter. In his mind's eye he could see himself lolling at the dinner table at the Towers and informing the Colonel over a glass of port that he proposed at an early date to marry his daughter. Possibly, purely out of courtesy, he would make the graceful gesture of affecting to seek the old buster's approval of the match ; but at the slightest sign of obduracy he would know what to do about it.

Well pleased, Sacheverell was walking to the Carlton Hotel, where he intended to lunch, when, just as he entered the Haymarket, he stopped abruptly, and a dark frown came into his resolute face.

A cab had passed him, and in that cab was sitting his *fiancée*, Muriel Branksome. And beside her, with a grin on his beastly face, was a young man in a Brigade of Guards tie. They had the air of a couple on their way to enjoy a spot of lunch.

That Sacheverell should have deduced immediately that the young man was Muriel's cousin Bernard was due to the fact that, like all the Mulliners, he was keenly intuitive. That he should have stood, fists clenched and eyes blazing, staring after the cab, we may set down to the circumstance that the spectacle of these two, squashed together in care-free proximity on the seat of a taxi, had occasioned in him the utmost rancour and jealousy.

Muriel, as she had told him, had once been engaged to her cousin, and the thought that they were still on terms of such sickening intimacy acted like acid on Sacheverell's soul.

Hobnobbing in cabs, by Jove ! Revelling *tête-à-tête* at luncheon-tables, forsooth ! Just the sort of goings-on that got the Cities of the Plain so disliked. He saw clearly that Muriel was a girl who would have to be handled firmly. There was nothing of the possessive Victorian male about him—he flattered himself that he was essentially modern and broadminded in his outlook—but if Muriel supposed that he was going to stand by like a clam while she went on Babylonian orgies all over the place with pop-eyed, smirking, toothbrush-moustached Guardees, she was due for a rude awakening.

And Sacheverell Mulliner did not mean maybe.

For an instant, he toyed with the idea of hailing another cab and following them. Then he thought better of it. He was enraged, but still master of himself. When he ticked Muriel off, as he intended to do, he wished to tick her off alone. If she was in London, she was, no doubt, staying with her aunt in Ennismore Gardens. He would get a bit of food and go on there at his leisure.

THE butler at Ennismore Gardens informed Sacheverell, when he arrived, that Muriel was, as he supposed, visiting the house, though for the moment out to lunch. Sacheverell waited, and presently the door of the drawing-room opened and the girl came in.

She seemed delighted to see him.

" Hullo, old streptococcus," she said, " here you are, eh ? I rang you up this morning to ask you to give me a bite of lunch, but you were out, so I roped in Bernard instead and we buzzed off to the Savoy in a taximeter."

" I saw you," said Sacheverell, coldly.

" Did you ? You poor chump, why didn't you yell ? "

" I had no desire to meet your cousin Bernard," said Sacheverell, still speaking in the same frigid voice. " And, while we are on this distasteful subject, I must request you not to see him again."

The girl stared.

" You must do how much ? "

" I must request you not to see him again," repeated Sacheverell. " I do not wish you to continue your cousin Bernard's acquaintance. I do not like his looks, nor do I approve of my *fiancée* lunching alone with young men "

Muriel seemed bewildered

" You want me to tie a can to poor old Bernard ? " she gasped.

" I insist upon it."

" But, you poor goop, we were children together."

Sacheverell shrugged his shoulders.

" If," he said, " you survived knowing Bernard as a child, why not be thankful and let it go at that ? Why deliberately come up for more punishment by seeking him out now ? Well, there it is," said Sacheverell, crisply. " I have told you my wishes, and you will respect them."

Muriel appeared to be experiencing a difficulty in finding words. She was bubbling like a saucepan on the point of coming to the boil. Nor could any unprejudiced critic have blamed her for her emotion. The last time she had seen Sacheverell, it must be remembered, he had been the sort of man who made a shrinking violet look like a Chicago gangster. And here he was now, staring her in the eye and shooting off his head for all the world as if he were Mussolini informing

the Italian Civil Service of a twelve per cent. cut in their weekly salary.

"And now," said Sacheverell, "there is another matter of which I wish to speak. I am anxious to see your father as soon as possible, in order to announce our engagement to him. It is quite time that he learned what my plans are. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will make arrangements to put me up at the Towers this coming week-end. Well," concluded Sacheverell, glancing at his watch, "I must be going. I have several matters to attend to, and your luncheon with your cousin was so prolonged that the hour is already late. Good-bye. We shall meet on Saturday."

Sacheverell was feeling at the top of his form when he set out for Branksome Towers on the following Saturday. The eighth lesson of his course on how to develop an iron will had reached him by the morning post, and he studied it on the train. It was a pippin. It showed you exactly how Napoleon had got that way, and there was some technical stuff about narrowing the eyes and fixing them keenly on people, which alone was worth the money. He alighted at Market Bransome station in a glow of self-confidence. The only thing that troubled him was a fear lest Sir Redvers might madly attempt anything in the nature of opposition to his plans. He did not wish to be compelled to scorch the poor old man to a crisp at his own dinner-table.

He was meditating on this and resolving to remember to do his best to let the Colonel down as lightly as possible, when a voice spoke his name.

"Mr. Mulliner?"

He turned. He supposed he was obliged to believe his eyes. And, if he did believe his eyes, the man standing beside him was none other than Muriel's cousin Bernard.

"They sent me down to meet you,"

"What is this sloppy, disgusting, slithery, gangrened mess?" inquired Sir Redvers in a hoarse, rasping voice.

continued Bernard. "I'm the old boy's nephew. Shall we totter to the car?"

Sacheverell was beyond speech. The thought that, after what he had said, Muriel should have invited her cousin to the Towers had robbed him of utterance. He followed the other to the car in silence.

In the drawing-room of the Towers they found Muriel, already dressed for dinner, brightly shaking up cocktails.

"So you got here?" said Muriel.

At another time, her manner might have struck Sacheverell as odd. There was an unwonted hardness in it. Her eye, though he was too preoccupied to notice it, had a dangerous gleam.

"Yes," he replied, shortly. "I got here."

"The Bish. arrived yet?" asked Bernard.

'Not yet. Father had a telegram from him. He won't be along till lateish. The Bishop of Bognor is coming to confirm a bevy of the local yokels," said Muriel, turning to Sacheverell.

"Oh?" said Sacheverell. He was not interested in Bishops. They left him cold. He was interested in nothing but her explanation of how her repellent cousin came to be here to-night in defiance of his own expressed wishes.

"Well," said Bernard, "I suppose I'd better be going up and disguising myself as a waiter."

"I, too," said Sacheverell. He turned to Muriel. "I take it I am in the Blue Suite, as before?"

"No," said Muriel. "You're in the Garden Room. You see . . ."

"I see perfectly," said Sacheverell, curtly. He turned on his heel and stalked out.

THE indignation which Sacheverell had felt on seeing Bernard at the station was as nothing compared with that which seethed within him as he dressed for dinner. That Bernard should be at the Towers at all was monstrous. That he should have been given the star bedroom in preference to himself, Sacheverell Mulliner, was one of those things before which the brain reels.

As you are doubtless aware, the distribution of bedrooms in country houses is as much a matter of rigid precedence as the distribution of dressing-rooms at a theatre. The nibs get the best ones, the small fry squash in where they can. If Sacheverell had been a *prima donna* told off to dress with the second character-woman, he could not have been more mortified.

It was not simply that the Blue Suite was the only one in the house with a bathroom of its own; it was the principle of the thing. The fact that he was pigging it in the Garden Room, while Bernard wallowed in luxury in the Blue Suite, was tantamount to a declaration on Muriel's part that she intended to get back at him for the attitude which he had taken over her luncheon-party. It was a silent, a deliberate snub, and Sacheverell came down to dinner coldly resolved to nip all this nonsense in the bud without delay.

Wrapped in his thoughts, he paid no attention to the conversation during the early part of dinner. He sipped a moody spoonful or two of soup and toyed with a morsel of salmon, but spiritually he was apart. It was only when the saddle of lamb had been distributed and the servitors had begun to come round with the vegetables that he was roused from his reverie by a sharp, barking noise from the head of the table, not unlike the note of a man-eating tiger catching sight of a Hindu peasant; and, glancing up, he perceived that it proceeded from Sir Redvers Branksome. His host was staring in an unpleasant manner at a dish which had just been placed under his nose by the butler.

It was in itself a commonplace enough occurrence—merely the old, old story of the head of the family kicking at the spinach; but for some reason it annoyed Sacheverell intensely. His strained nerves were jangled by the animal cries which had begun to fill the air; and he told himself that Sir Redvers, if he did not switch it off pretty quick, was going to be put through it in no uncertain fashion.

Sir Redvers, meanwhile, unconscious of impending doom, was glaring at the dish.

"What," he inquired in a hoarse, rasping voice, "is this dashed, sloppy, disgusting, slithery, gangrened mess?"

The butler did not reply. He had been through all this before. He merely increased in volume the detached expression which good butlers wear on these occasions. He looked like a prominent banker refusing to speak without advice of counsel. It was Muriel who supplied the necessary information.

"It's spinach, Father."

"Then take it away and give it to the cat. You know I hate spinach."

"But it's so good for you."

"Who says it's good for me?"

"All the doctors. It bucks you up if you haven't enough hæmoglobins."

"I have plenty of hæmoglobins," said the Colonel, testily. "More than I know what to do with."

"It's full of iron."

"Iron!" The Colonel's eyebrows had drawn themselves together into a single, formidable zareba of hair. He snorted fiercely. "Iron! Do you take me for a sword-swallower? Are you under the impression that I am an ostrich, that I should browse on iron? Perhaps you would like me to tuck away a few door-knobs and a couple of pairs of roller-skates? Or a small portion of tin-tacks? Iron, forsooth!"

Just, in short, the ordinary, conventional spinach-row of the better-class English home; but Sacheverell was in no mood for it. This bickering and wrangling irritated him, and he decided that it must stop. He half rose from his chair.

"Branksome," he said, in a quiet, level voice, "you will eat your spinach."

"Eh? What? What's that?"

"Get this well into your fat head," said Muriel. "I am not going to marry you. I wouldn't marry you if you offered me all the money in the world. So there!"

"You will eat your nice spinach immediately, Branksome," said Sacheverell. And, at the same time, he narrowed his eyes and fixed them keenly on his host.

And suddenly the rich purple colour began to die out of the old man's cheeks. Gradually his eyebrows crept back into their normal position. For a brief while he met Sacheverell's eye; then he dropped his own and a weak smile came into his face.

"Well, well," he said, with a pathetic attempt at bluffness, as he reached over and grabbed the spoon, "what have we here? Spinach, eh? Capital, capital! Full of iron, I believe, and highly recommended by the medical profession."

And he dug in and scooped up a liberal portion.

A short silence followed, broken only by the sloshing sound of Colonel Branksome eating spinach. Then Sacheverell spoke.

"I wish to you see in your study immediately after dinner, Colonel," he said.

MURIEL was playing the piano when Sacheverell came into the drawing-room some forty minutes after the conclusion of dinner. She was interpreting a work by one of those Russian composers who seem to have been provided by Nature especially with a view to soothing the nervous systems of young girls who are not feeling quite themselves. It was a piece from which the best results are obtained by hauling off and delivering a series of overhand swings which make the instrument wobble like the engine-room of a liner; and Muriel, who was a fine, sturdy girl, was putting a lot of beef into it.

The change in Sacheverell had distressed Muriel Branksome beyond measure. Contemplating him, she felt as she had sometimes felt at a dance when she had told her partner to bring her ice-cream and he had come frisking up with a bowl of mock-turtle soup. Cheated—that is what she felt she had been. She had given her heart to a mild, sweet-natured, lovable lamb; and the moment she had done so he had suddenly flung off his sheep's clothing and said, "April fool! I'm a wolf!"

Haughty by nature, Muriel Branksome was incapable of bearing anything in the shape of bossiness from the male. Her proud spirit revolted at it. And bossiness had become Sacheverell Mulliner's middle name.

The result was that, when Sacheverell entered the drawing-room, he found his loved one all set for the big explosion.

He suspected nothing. He was pleased with himself, and looked it.

"I put your father in his place all right at dinner, what?" said Sacheverell, buoyantly. "Put him right where he belonged, I think."

Muriel gnashed her teeth in a quiet undertone.

"He isn't so hot," said Sacheverell. "The way you used to talk about him, one would have thought he was the real ginger. Quite the reverse I found him. As nice a soft-spoken old bird as one could wish to meet. When I told him about our engagement, he just came and rubbed his head against my leg, and rolled over with his paws in the air."

Muriel swallowed softly.

"Our what?" she said.

"Our engagement."

"Oh?" said Muriel. "You told him we were engaged, did you?"

"I certainly did."

"Then you can jolly well go back," said Muriel, blazing into sudden fury, "and tell him you were talking through your hat."

Sacheverell stared.

"That last remark once again, if you don't mind."

"A hundred times, if you wish it," said Muriel. "Get this well into your fat head. Memorize it carefully. If necessary, write it on your cuff. I am not going to marry you. I wouldn't marry you to win a substantial bet or to please an old school-friend. I wouldn't marry you if you offered me all the money in the world. So there!"

Sacheverell blinked. He was taken aback.

"This sounds like the bird," he said.

"It is the bird."

"You are really giving me the old raspberry?"

"I am."

"Don't you love your little Sacheverell?"

"No, I don't. I think my little Sacheverell is a mess."

There was a silence. Sacheverell regarded her with lowered brows. Then he uttered a short, bitter laugh.

"Oh, very well," he said.

Sacheverell Mulliner boiled with jealous rage. Of course, he saw what had happened. The girl had fallen once more under the glamorous spell of her cousin Bernard, and proposed to throw a Mulliner's heart aside like a soiled glove. But if she thought he was going to accept the situation meekly and say no more about it, she would soon discover her error.

Sacheverell loved this girl—not with the tepid preference which passes for love in these degenerate days, but with all the mediæval fervour of a rich and passionate soul. And he intended to marry her. Yes, if the whole Brigade of Guards stood between, he was resolved to walk up the aisle with her arm in his and help her cut the cake at the subsequent breakfast.

"What is the matter, my dear Bishop?" asked the Colonel. "It is a burglar, my dear Colonel," said the Bishop.

Bernard . . . ! He would soon settle Bernard.

For all his inner ferment, Sacheverell retained undiminished the clearness of mind which characterizes Mulliners in times of crisis. An hour's walk up and down the terrace had shown him what he must do. There was nothing to be gained by acting hastily. He must confront Bernard alone in the silent night, when they would be free from danger of interruption and he could set the full force of his iron personality playing over the fellow like a hose.

And so it came about that the hour of eleven, striking from the clock above the stables, found Sacheverell Mulliner sitting grimly in the Blue Suite, waiting for his victim to arrive.

His brain was like ice. He had matured his plan of campaign. He did not intend to hurt the man—merely to order him to leave the house instantly and never venture to see or speak to Muriel again.

So mused Sacheverell Mulliner, unaware

that no Cousin Bernard would come within ten yards of the Blue Suite that night. Bernard had already retired to rest in the Pink Room on the third floor, which had been his roosting-place from the beginning of his visit. The Blue Suite, being the abode of the most honoured guest, had, of course, been earmarked from the start for the Bishop of Bognor.

Carburetter trouble and a series of detours had delayed the Bishop in his journey to Branksome Towers. At first, he had hoped to make it in time for dinner. Then he had anticipated an arrival at about nine-thirty. Finally, he was exceedingly relieved to reach his destination shortly after eleven.

A quick sandwich and a small lime-juice and soda were all that the Prelate asked of his host at that advanced hour. These consumed, he announced himself ready for bed, and Colonel Branksome conducted him to the door of the Blue Suite.

"I hope you will find everything comfortable, my dear Bishop," he said.

"I am convinced of it, my dear Branksome," said the Bishop. "And to-morrow I trust I shall feel less fatigued and in a position to meet the rest of your guests."

"There is only one beside my nephew Bernard. A young fellow named Mulliner."

"Mulligan?"

"Mulliner."

"Ah, yes," said the Bishop. "Mulliner."

And simultaneously, inside the room, my nephew Sacheverell sprang from his chair, and stood frozen, like a statue.

IN narrating this story, I have touched lightly upon Sacheverell's career at Harborough College. I shall not be digressing now if I relate briefly what had always been to him the high spot in it:—

One sunny summer day, when a lad of fourteen and a half, my nephew had sought to relieve the tedium of school routine by taking a golf-ball and flinging it against the side of the building, his intention being to catch it as it rebounded. Unfortunately, when it came to the acid test, the ball did not rebound. Instead of going due North, it went Nor'nor'-East, with the result that it passed through the window of the headmaster's library at the precise moment when that high official was about to lean out for a breath of air. And the next moment, a voice, proceeding apparently from Heaven, had spoken one word. The voice was like the deeper notes of a great organ, and the word was the single word:—

"MULLINER!!!"

And, just as the word Sacheverell now heard was the same word, so was the voice the same voice.

To appreciate my nephew's concern, you must understand that the episode which I have just related had remained green in his memory right through the years. His pet nightmare, and the one which had had so depressing an effect on his *moral*, had always been the one where he found himself standing, quivering and helpless, while a Voice uttered the single word "Mulliner!"

Little wonder, then, that he now remained for an instant paralyzed. His only coherent thought was a bitter reflection that somebody might have had the sense to tell him that the Bishop of Bognor was his old headmaster, the Rev. J. G. Smethurst. Naturally, in that case, he would have been out of the place in two strides. But they had simply said the Bishop of Bognor, and it had meant nothing to him.

Now that it was too late, he seemed to recall having heard somebody somewhere say something about the Rev. J. G. Smethurst becoming a Bishop; and even in this moment of collapse he was able to feel a thrill of justifiable indignation at the shabbiness of the act. It wasn't fair for headmasters to change their names like this and take people unawares. The Rev. J. G. Smethurst might argue as much as he liked, but he couldn't get away from the fact that he had played a shady trick on the community. The man was practically going about under an alias.

But this was no time for abstract meditations on the question of right and wrong. He must hide . . . hide.

Yet why, you are asking, should my nephew Sacheverell wish to hide? Had he not in eight easy lessons from the Leave-It-To-Us School of Correspondence acquired complete self-confidence and an iron will? He had, but in this awful moment all that he had learned had passed from him like a dream. The years had rolled back, and he was a fifteen-year-old jelly again, in the full grip of his Headmaster Phobia.

To dive under the bed was for Sacheverell Mulliner, the work of a moment. And there, as the door opened, he lay, holding his breath and trying to keep his ears from rustling in the draught.

Smethurst (alias Bognor) was a leisurely undresser. He doffed his gaiters, and then for some little time stood, apparently in a reverie, humming one of the song-hits from the Psalms. Eventually, he resumed his disrobing, but even then the ordeal was not over. As far as Sacheverell could see, in the constrained position in which he was lying, the Bishop was doing a few setting-up exercises. Then he went into the bathroom and cleaned his teeth. It was only at the end of half an hour that he finally climbed between the sheets and switched off the light.

For a long while after he had done so, Sacheverell remained where he was, motionless. But presently a faint rhythmical sound from the neighbourhood of the pillows assured him that the other was asleep, and he crawled cautiously from his lair. Then, stepping with infinite caution, he moved to the door, opened it, and passed through.

The relief which Sacheverell felt as he closed the door behind him would have been less intense had he realized that through a slight mistake in his bearings he had not, as he supposed, reached the haven of the passage outside but had merely entered the bathroom. This fact was not brought home to him until he had collided with an unexpected chair, upset it, tripped over a bath-mat, clutched for support into the darkness and brushed from off the glass shelf above the basin a series of bottles, containing—in the order given—Scalpo (" It Fertilizes the Follicles "), Soothine—for applying to the face after shaving, and Doctor Wilberforce's Golden Gargle in the large or seven-and-sixpenny size. These, crashing to the floor, would have revealed the truth to a far duller man than Sacheverell Mulliner.

He acted swiftly. From the room beyond, there had come to his ears the unmistakable sound of a Bishop sitting up in bed, and he did not delay. Hastily groping for the switch, he turned on the light. He found the bolt and shot it. Only then did he sit down on the edge of the bath and attempt to pass the situation under careful review.

He was not allowed long for quiet thinking. Through the door came the sound of deep breathing. Then a voice spoke.

" Who is they-ah ? "

As always in the dear old days of school, it caused Sacheverell to leap six inches. He had just descended again, when another voice spoke in the bedroom. It was that of Colonel Sir Redvers Branksome, who had heard the crashing of glass and had come, in the kindly spirit of a good host, to make inquiries.

" What is the matter, my dear Bishop ? " he asked.

" It is a burglar, my dear Colonel," said the Bishop.

" A burglar ? "

" A burglar. He has locked himself in the bathroom."

" Then how extremely fortunate," said the Colonel, heartily, " that I should have brought along this battle-axe and shot-gun on the chance."

Sacheverell felt that it was time to join in the conversation. He went to the door and put his lips against the keyhole.

" It's all right," he said, quaveringly.

The Colonel uttered a surprised exclamation.

" He says it's all right," he reported.

" Why does he say it is all right ? " asked the Bishop.

" I didn't ask him," replied the Colonel. " He just said it was all right."

The Bishop sniffed peevishly.

" It is not all right," he said, with a certain heat. " And I am at a loss to understand why the man should affect to assume that it is. I suggest, my dear Colonel, that our best method of procedure is as follows : You take the shot-gun and stand in readiness, and I will hew down the door with this admirable battle-axe."

And it was at this undeniably critical point in the proceedings that something soft and clinging brushed against Sacheverell's right ear, causing him to leap again—this time a matter of eight inches and a quarter. And, spinning round, he discovered that what had touched his ear was the curtain of the bathroom window.

There now came a splintering crash, and the door shook on its hinges. The Bishop, with all the blood of a hundred Militant Churchmen ancestors afire within him, had started operations with the axe.

But Sacheverell scarcely heard the noise. The sight of the open window had claimed his entire attention. And now, moving nimbly, he clambered through it, alighting on what seemed to be leads.

For an instant, he gazed wildly about him. Then, animated, perhaps, by some subconscious memory of the boy who bore 'mid snow and ice the banner with the strange device, " Excelsior ! " he leaped quickly upwards and started to climb the roof.

MURIEL BRANKSOME, on retiring to her room on the floor above the Blue Suite, had not gone to bed. She was sitting at her open window, thinking, thinking.

Her thoughts were bitter ones. It was not that she felt remorseful. In giving Sacheverell the air at their recent interview, her conscience told her that she had acted rightly. He had behaved like a domineering Sheik of the Desert ; and a dislike for domineering Sheiks of the Desert had always been an integral part of her spiritual make-up.

But the consciousness of having justice on her side is not always enough to sustain a girl at such a time ; and an aching pain gripped Muriel as she thought of the Sacheverell she had loved—the old, mild, sweet-natured Sacheverell who had asked nothing better than to gaze at her with adoring eyes, removing them only when

he found it necessary to give his attention to the bit of string with which he was doing tricks. She mourned for this vanished Sacheverell.

Obviously, after what had happened, he would leave the house early in the morning—probably long before she came down, for she was a late riser. She wondered if she would ever see him again.

At this moment, she did. He was climbing up the slope of the roof towards her on his hands and knees—and, for one who was not a cat, doing it extremely well. She had hardly risen to her feet before he was standing at the window, clutching the sill.

Muriel choked. She stared at him with wide, tragic eyes.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Well, as a matter of fact," said Sacheverell, "I was wondering if you would mind if I hid under your bed for a bit."

And suddenly the girl saw that his face was contorted with a strange terror. And, at the spectacle, all her animosity seemed to be swept away as if on a tidal wave, and back came the old love and esteem, piping hot and as fresh as ever. An instant before, she had been wanting to beat him over the head with a brick. Now, she ached to comfort and protect him. For here once more was the Sacheverell she had worshipped—the poor, timid, fluttering, helpless pipsqueak whose hair she had always wanted to stroke and to whom she had felt a strange, intermittent urge to offer lumps of sugar.

"Come right in," she said.

He threw her a hasty word of thanks and shot over the sill. Then, abruptly, he stiffened, and the wild, hunted look was in his eyes again. From somewhere below there had come the deep baying of a Bishop on the scent. He clutched at Muriel, and she held him to her like a mother soothing a nightmare-ridden child.

"Listen!" he whispered.

"Who are they?" asked Muriel.

"Headmasters," panted Sacheverell. "Droves of headmasters. And Colonels. Coveys of Colonels. With battle-axes and shot-guns. Save me, Muriel!"

She directed him to the bed, and he disappeared beneath it like a diving-duck.

"You will be quite safe there," said Muriel. "And now tell me what it is all about."

OUTSIDE, they could hear the noise of the hue-and-cry. The original strength of the company appeared to have been augmented by the butler and a few sporting footmen. Brokenly, Sacheverell told her all.

"But what were you doing in the Blue Suite?" asked the girl, when he had concluded his tale. "I don't understand."

"I went to interview your cousin Bernard, to tell him that he should marry you only over my dead body."

"What an unpleasant idea!" said Muriel, shivering a little. "And I don't see how it could have been done, anyway." She paused a moment, listening to the uproar. Somewhere downstairs, footmen seemed to be falling over one another; and once there came the shrill cry of a Hunting Bishop stymied by a hat-stand. "But what on earth," she asked, resuming her remarks, "made you think that I was going to marry Bernard?"

"I thought that that was why you gave me the bird."

"Of course it wasn't. I gave you the bird because you had suddenly turned into a beastly, barking, bullying, overbearing blighter."

There was a pause before Sacheverell spoke.

"Had I?" he said at length. "Yes, I suppose I had. Tell me," he continued, "is there a good milk-train in the morning?"

"At three-forty, I believe."

"I'll catch it."

"Must you really go?"

"I must, indeed."

"Oh, well," said Muriel, "it won't be long before we meet again. I'll run up to London one of these days, and we'll have a bit of lunch together and get married, and——"

A gasp came from beneath the bed.

"Married! Do you really mean that you will marry me, Muriel?"

"Of course I will. The past is dead. You are my own precious angel pet again, and I love you madly, passionately. What's been the matter with you these last few weeks, I can't imagine, but I can see it's all over now, so don't let's talk any more about it. Hark!" she said, holding up a finger as a sonorous booming noise filled the night, accompanied by a flood of rich oaths in what appeared to be some foreign language, possibly Hindustani. "I think Father has tripped over the dinner-gong."

Sacheverell did not answer. His heart was too full for words. He was thinking how deeply he loved this girl, and how happy those few remarks of hers had made him.

And yet, mingled with his joy, there was something of sorrow. As the old Roman poet has it, *Surgit amari aliquid.* He had just remembered that he had paid the Leave-It-To-Us Correspondence School fifteen guineas in advance for a course of twenty lessons. He was abandoning the course after taking eight. And the thought that stabbed him like a knife was that he no longer had enough self-confidence and iron will left to enable him to go to Jno B. Philbrick, Mgr, and demand a refund.

FIFTY YEARS HENCE

THE great mass of human beings absorbed in the toils, cares, and activities of life, are only dimly conscious of the pace at which mankind has begun to travel. We look back one hundred years and see that great changes have taken place. We look back fifty years and see that the speed is constantly quickening. This present century has witnessed an enormous revolution in material things, in scientific appliances, in political institutions, in manners and customs.

The greatest change of all is the least perceptible by individuals; it is the far greater numbers which in every civilized country participate in the fuller life of man. "In those days," said Disraeli, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "England was for the few and for the very few." "The twice two thousand for whom," wrote Byron, "the world is made," have given place to many millions for whom existence has become larger, safer, more varied, more full of hope and choice. In the United States scores of millions have lifted themselves above primary necessities and comforts, and aspire to culture—at least for their children. Europe, though stunned and lacerated by Armageddon, presents a similar if less general advance. We all take the modern conveniences and facilities as they are offered to us, without being grateful or consciously happier. But we simply could not live

By The Right Hon.
WINSTON CHURCHILL P.C.

Illustrated by STEVEN SPURRIER

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if they were taken away. We assume that progress will be constant. "This 'ere progress," Mr. Wells makes one of his characters remark, "keeps going on. It's wonderful 'ow it keeps going on." It is also very fortunate; for if it stopped, or were reversed, there would be a catastrophe of unimaginable horror. Mankind has gone too far to go back, and is moving too fast to stop. There are too many people not merely whose comfort, but whose very existence is maintained by processes unknown a century ago, for us to afford even a temporary check, still less a general setback, without experiencing calamity in its most frightful forms.

When we look back beyond one hundred years over the long trails of history, we see immediately why the age we live in differs from all other ages in human annals. Mankind has sometimes travelled forwards and sometimes backwards, or has stood still for hundreds of years. It remained stationary in India and in China for thousands of years. But now it is moving very fast.

WHAT is it that has produced this new prodigious speed of man? Science is the cause. Her feeble groping fingers lifted here and there, often trampled underfoot, often frozen in isolation, have now become a vast organized, united, class-conscious army marching forward upon all the fronts towards objectives none may measure or define. It is a proud, ambitious army which cares nothing for all the laws that men have made; nothing for their most time-honoured customs, or most dearly-cherished beliefs, or deepest instincts. It is this power called Science which has laid hold of us, conscripted us into its regiments and batteries, set us to work upon its highways and in its arsenals; rewarded us for our services, healed us when we were wounded, trained us when we were young, pensioned us when we were worn out. None of the generations of men before the last two or three were ever gripped, for good or ill, and handled like this.

Man in the earliest stages lived alone and avoided his neighbours with as much anxiety and probably as much reason as he avoided the fierce flesh-eating beasts that shared his forests. With the introduction of domestic animals the advantages of co-operation and division of labour became manifest. In neolithic times, when cereals were produced and agriculture developed, the bleak, hungry period, whilst the seeds were germinating beneath the soil, involved some form of capitalism and the recognition of those special rights of landed proprietors the traces of which are still visible in our legislation. Each stage involved new problems, legal, sociological, and moral. But progress only crawled, and often rested for a thousand years or so.

The two ribbon states in the valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates produced civilizations as full of pomp and circumstance and more stable than any the world has ever known. Their autocracies and hierarchies were founded upon the control and distribution of water. The rulers held the people in an efficiency of despotism never equalled till Soviet Russia was born. They had only to cut off or stint the water in the canals to starve or subjugate rebellious provinces. This gave them powers at once as irresistible and capable of intimate regulation as the control of all food supplies gives to the Bolshevik commissars. Safe from internal trouble, they were vulnerable only to external attack.

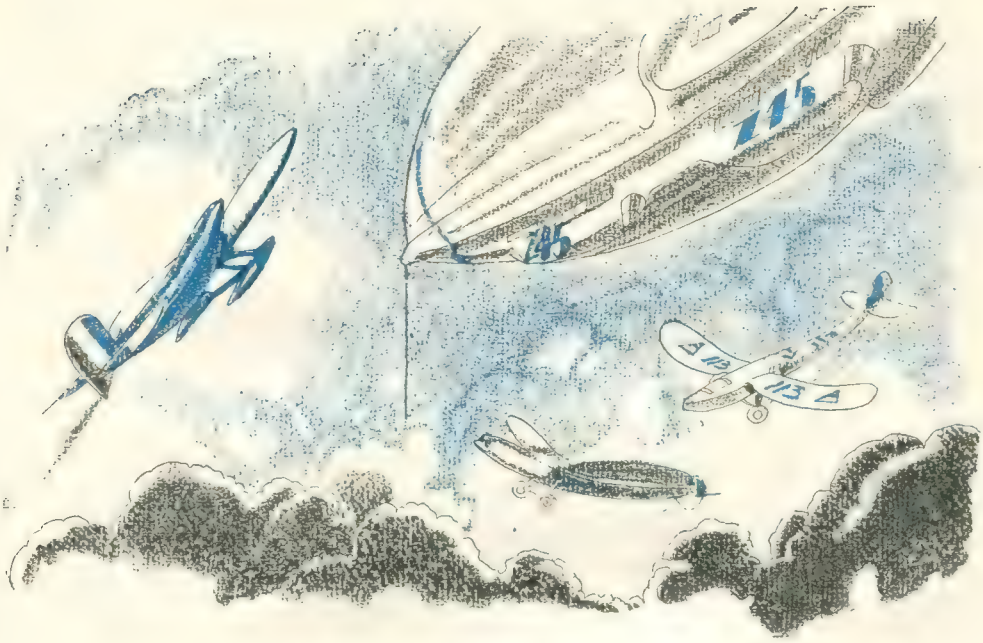
But in these states man had not learnt to catalyse the forces of Nature. The maximum power available was the sum of the muscular efforts of all the inhabitants. Later empires scarcely less imposing, but far less stable, rose and fell. In the methods of production and communication, in the modes of getting food and exchanging goods, there was less change

between the time of Sargon and the time of Louis XIV, than there has been between the accession of Queen Victoria and the present day. Darius could probably send a message from Susa to Sardis faster then Philip II could transmit an order from Madrid to Brussels. Sir Robert Peel, summoned in 1834 from Rome to form a Government in London, took the same time as the Emperor Vespasian when he had to hasten to his province of Britain. The bathrooms of the palaces of Minos were superior to those of Versailles. A priest from Thebes would probably have felt more at home at the Council of Trent two thousand years after Thebes had vanished, than Sir Isaac Newton at a modern undergraduate physical society, or George Stephenson in the Institute of Electrical Engineers. The changes have been so sudden and so gigantic, that no period in history can be compared with the last century. The past no longer enables us even dimly to measure the future.

* * * *

The most wonderful of all modern

"Science has laid hold of us, heals us when we are wounded, trains us when we are young, and pensions us when we are worn out."



prophecies is found in Tennyson's "Locksley Hall."

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales ;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue ;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm ;

Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

These six stanzas of prediction, written eighty years ago, have already been fulfilled. The conquest of the air for commerce and war, the world-struggle of Armageddon, the League of Nations, the Bolshevik revolution—all divined in their true sequence by the great Victorian—all now already in the history books and stirring the world around us to-day! We may search the Scriptures in vain for such precise and swiftly vindicated forecasts of the future. Jeremiah and Isaiah dealt in dark and cryptic parables, pointing to remote events and capable of many varied interpretations from time to time. A Judge, a Prophet, a Redeemer would arise to save his chosen People ; and from age to age the Jews asked, disputing "Art thou he that should come ? or look we for another ?" But "Locksley Hall" contains an exact foretelling in their sequence of stupendous events, which

many of those who knew the writer lived to see and endure! The dawn of the Victorian era opened the new period of man; and the genius of the poet cast back the curtains which veiled it.

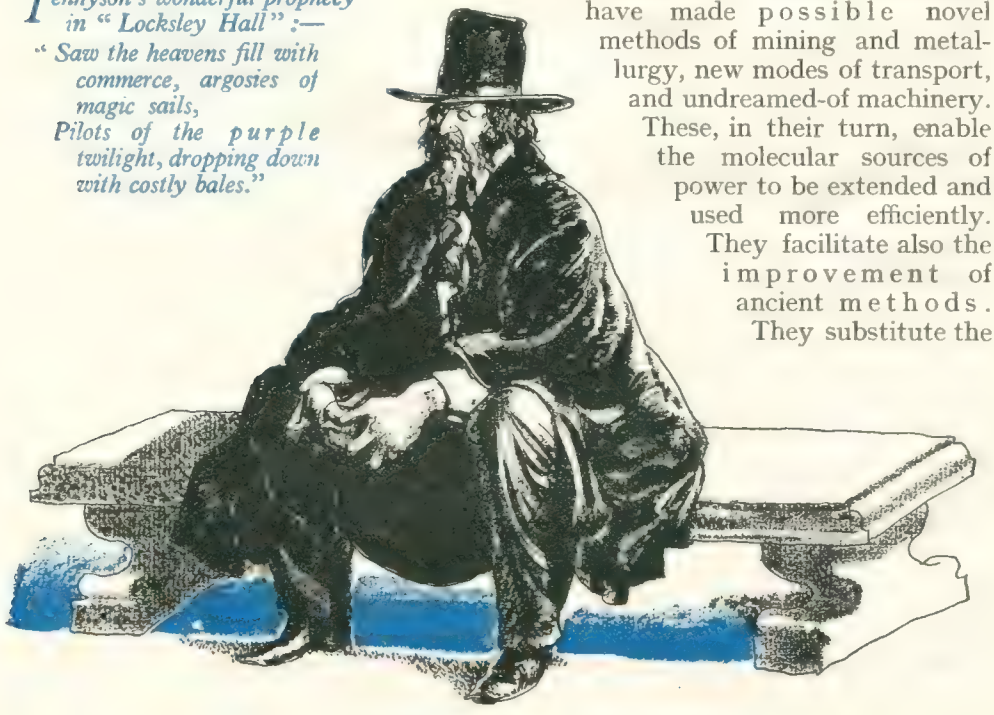
* * * *

There are two processes which we adopt consciously or unconsciously when we try to prophesy. We can seek a period in the past whose conditions resemble as closely as possible those of our day, and presume that the sequel to that period will, save for some minor alterations, be similar. Secondly, we can survey the general course of development in our immediate past, and endeavour to prolong it into the near future. The first is the method of the historian; the second that of the scientist. Only the second is open to us now, and this only in a partial sphere. By observing all that Science has achieved in modern times, and the knowledge and power now in her possession, we can predict with some assurance the inventions and discoveries which will govern our future. We can but guess, peering through a glass darkly, what reactions these discoveries and their applications will produce upon the habits, the outlook, and spirit of men.

Whereas, formerly, the utmost power that man could guide and control was a team of horses, or a galley full of slaves; or, possibly, if they could be sufficiently drilled and harnessed, a gang of labourers like the Israelites in Egypt, it is to-day already possible to control accurately from the bridge of a battle-cruiser all the power of hundreds of thousands of men. Or to set off with one finger a mine capable in an instant of destroying the work of thousands of man-years. These changes are due to the substitution of molecular energy for muscular energy, and its direction and control by an elaborate, beautifully perfected apparatus.

These immense new sources of power, and the fact that they can be wielded by a single individual, have made possible novel methods of mining and metallurgy, new modes of transport, and undreamed-of machinery. These, in their turn, enable the molecular sources of power to be extended and used more efficiently. They facilitate also the improvement of ancient methods. They substitute the

Tennyson's wonderful prophecy in "Locksley Hall":—
"Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales."

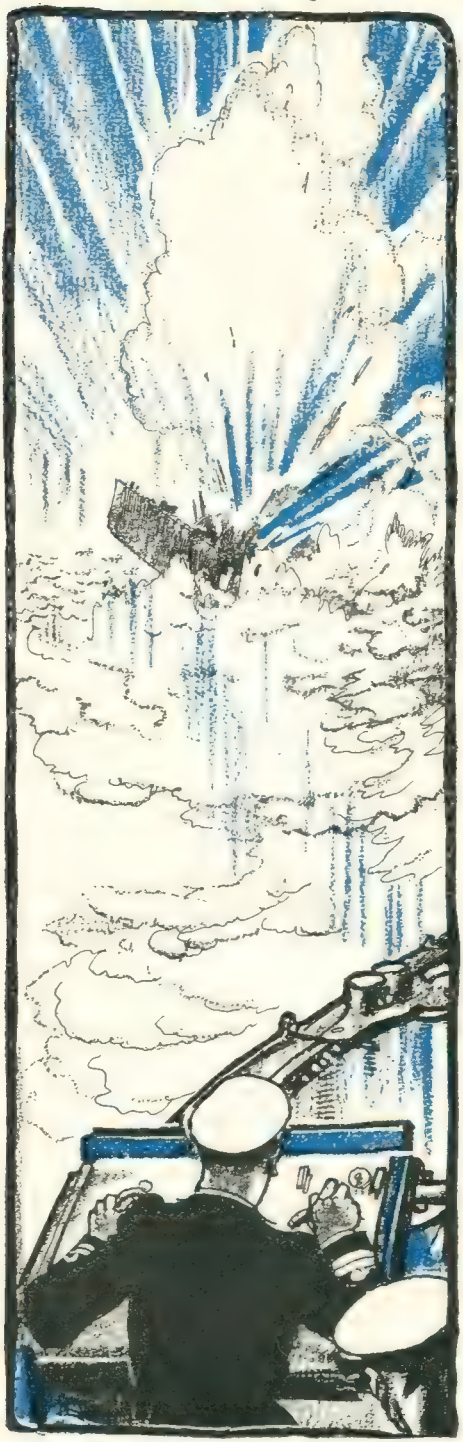


hundred-thousand-kilowatts turbo-generators at Niagara for the mill-wheel of our forefathers. Each invention acted and reacted on other inventions, and with ever-growing rapidity that vast structure of technical achievement was raised which separates the civilization of to-day from all that the past has known.

THERE is no doubt that this evolution will continue at an increasing rate. We know enough to be sure that the scientific achievements of the next fifty years will be far greater, more rapid, and more surprising, than those we have already experienced. The slide-lathe enabled machines of precision to be made, and the power of steam rushed out upon the world. And through the steam clouds flashed the dazzling lightnings of electricity. But this is only a beginning. High authorities tell us that new sources of power, vastly more important than any we yet know, will surely be discovered. Nuclear energy is incomparably greater than the molecular energy which we use to-day. The coal a man can get in a day can easily do five hundred times as much work as the man himself. Nuclear energy is at least one million times more powerful still. If the hydrogen atoms in a pound of water could be prevailed upon to combine together and form helium, it would suffice to drive a thousand-horse-power engine for a whole year. If the electrons—those tiny planets of the atomic systems—were induced to combine with the nuclei in the hydrogen, the horse-power liberated would be one hundred and twenty times greater still. There is no question among scientists that this gigantic source of energy exists. What is lacking is the match to set the bonfire alight, or it may be the detonator to cause the dynamite to explode. The scientists are looking for this.

The discovery and control of such sources of power would cause changes in human affairs incomparably greater than those produced by the steam-engine four generations ago. Schemes of cosmic magnitude would become feasible. Geography and climate would obey our orders. Fifty thousand tons of water, the amount displaced by the *Berengaria*, would, if exploited as described, suffice to shift Ireland into the middle of the Atlantic. The amount of rain falling yearly upon the Epsom race course would be enough to thaw all the ice at the Arctic and Antarctic poles. The changing of one element into another, by means of temperatures and pressures far beyond our present reach, would transform beyond all description our standards of values. Materials thirty times stronger than the best steel would create engines fit to bridle the new forms of power. Communications and transport by land, water, and air, would take unimaginable forms if, as is in principle possible, we could make an engine of six hundred horse-power weighing twenty pounds and carrying fuel for a thousand hours in a tank the size of a fountain-pen. Wireless telephones and television following, naturally, upon their present path of development, would enable their owner to connect up to any room similarly installed, and hear and take part in the conversation as well as if he put his head in through the window. The congregation of men in cities would become superfluous. It would rarely be necessary to call in person on any but the most intimate friends; but if so, excessively rapid means of communication would be at hand. There would be no more object in living in the same city with one's neighbour than there is to-day in living with him in the same house. The cities and the countryside would become indistinguishable. Every home would have its garden and its glade.

Up till recent times the production of food has been the prime struggle of man. That war is won. There is no doubt that the civilized races can



"It is possible to control from the bridge of a cruiser all the power of hundreds of thousands of men."

produce or procure all the food they require. Indeed, some of the problems which vex us to-day are due to the production of wheat by white men having exceeded their own needs, before yellow men, brown men, and black men have learned to demand and become able to purchase a diet superior to rice. But food is at present obtained almost entirely from the energy of the sunlight. The radiation from the sun produces from the carbonic acid in the air more or less complicated carbon compounds which serve us in plants and vegetables. We use the latent chemical energy of these to keep our bodies warm, we convert it into muscular effort. We employ it in the complicated processes of digestion to repair and replace the wasted cells of our bodies. Many people, of course, prefer food in what the vegetarians call "the second-hand form," *i.e.*, after it has been digested and converted into meat for us by domestic animals kept for this purpose. In all these processes, however, ninety-nine parts of the solar energy is wasted for every part used.

Even without the new sources of power great improvements are probable here. Microbes, which at present convert the nitrogen of the air into the proteins by which animals live, will be fostered and made to work under controlled conditions, just as yeast is now. New strains of microbes will be developed and made to do a great deal of our chemistry for us. With a greater knowledge of what are called hormones, *i.e.*, the chemical messengers in our blood, it will be possible to control growth. We shall escape the absurdity of growing a whole chicken in order to eat the breast or wing, by growing these parts separately under a suitable medium. Synthetic food will, of course, also be used in the future. Nor need the pleasures of the table be banished. That gloomy Utopia of tabloid meals need never be invaded. The new foods will be practically indistinguishable from the natural products from the

outset, and any changes will be so gradual as to escape observation.

If the gigantic sources of power become available, food would be produced without recourse to sunlight. Vast cellars, in which artificial radiation is generated, may replace the cornfields and potato patches of the world. Parks and gardens will cover our pastures and ploughed fields. When the time comes there will be plenty of room for the cities to spread themselves again.

* * * *

BUT equally startling developments lie already just beyond our finger-tips in the breeding of human beings, and the shaping of human nature. It used to be said of scientific progress: "You have taught the dog more tricks; but you cannot alter the breed of the dog." But this is no longer true. A few years ago London was surprised by a play called "Rossum's Universal Robots." The production of such beings may well be possible within fifty years. They will not be made, but grown under glass. There seems little doubt that it will be possible to carry out the entire cycle which now leads to the birth of a child, in artificial surroundings. Interference with the mental development of such beings, expert suggestion and treatment in the earlier years, would produce beings specialized to thought or toil. The production of creatures, for instance, which have admirable physical development, with their mental endowment stunted in particular directions, is almost within the range of human power. A being might be produced capable of tending a machine, but without other ambitions. Our minds recoil from such fearful eventualities, and the laws of a Christian civilization will prevent them. But might not lopsided creatures of this type fit in well with the Communist doctrines of Russia? Might not the Union of Soviet Republics, armed with all the power of Science, find it in harmony with all their aims to produce a race adapted to mechanical tasks and with no other idea but to obey the Communist State? The present nature of man is tough and resilient. It casts up its sparks of genius in the darkest and most unexpected places. But Robots could be made to fit the grisly theories of Communism. There is nothing in the philosophy of Communists to prevent their creation; and they have no religion.

We have touched upon this sphere only lightly, but with the purpose of pointing out that in a future which our children may live to see, powers will be in the hands of men altogether different from any by which human nature has been moulded. Explosive forces, energy, materials, machinery, will be available upon a scale which can annihilate whole nations. Despotisms and tyrannies will be able to prescribe the lives and even the wishes of their subjects in a manner never known since time began. If to these tremendous and awful powers is added the pitiless sub-human wickedness which we now see embodied in one of the most powerful reigning governments, who shall say that the world itself will not be wrecked, or, indeed, that it ought not to be wrecked? There are nightmares of the future from which a fortunate collision with some wandering star, reducing the earth to incandescent gas, might be a merciful deliverance.

* * * *

IT is, indeed, a descent almost to the ridiculous to contemplate the impact of the tremendous and terrifying discoveries which are approaching, upon the structure of Parliamentary institutions. How can we imagine the whole mass of the people being capable of deciding by votes at elections upon the right course to adopt amid these cataclysmic changes? Even now the Parliaments of every country have shown themselves quite inadequate to deal with the economic problems which dominate the affairs of every nation and of the world. Before these problems

the claptrap of the hustings and the stunts of the newspapers wither and vanish away.

Democracy as a guide or motive to progress has long been known to be incompetent. None of the legislative assemblies of the great modern states represent in universal suffrage even a fraction of the strength or wisdom of the community. Great nations are no longer led by their ablest men or by those who know most about their immediate affairs, or even by those who have a coherent doctrine. Democratic governments drift along the line of least resistance, taking short views, paying their way with sops and doles, and smoothing their path with pleasant-sounding platitudes. Never was there less continuity or design in their affairs; and yet towards them are coming swiftly changes which will revolutionize for good or ill not only the whole economic structure of the world, but the social habits and moral outlook of every family. Only the Communists have a plan and a gospel. It is a plan fatal to personal freedom and a gospel founded upon Hate.

* * * *

Certain it is that while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. The brain of a modern man does not differ in essentials from that of the human beings who fought and loved here millions of years ago.

The nature of man has remained hitherto practically unchanged. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds.

"There seems little doubt that it will be possible to carry out the entire cycle which now leads to the birth of a child, in artificial surroundings."

and modern woman will back him up.

At the present moment, the civilizations of many different ages co-exist together in the world, and their representatives meet and converse. Englishmen, Frenchmen, or Americans, with ideas abreast of the twentieth century, do business with Indians or Chinese whose civilizations were crystallized several thousands of years ago. We have the spectacle of the powers and weapons of man far outstripping the march of his intelligence; we have the march of his intelligence proceeding far more rapidly than the development of his nobility. We may well find ourselves in presence of "the strength of civilization without its mercy."

IT is, therefore, above all things, important that the moral philosophy and spiritual conceptions of men and nations should hold their own amid these formidable scientific evolutions. It would be much better to call a halt in material progress and discovery rather than to be mastered by our own apparatus and the forces which it directs. There are secrets too mysterious for man in his present state to know; secrets which, once penetrated, may be fatal to human happiness and glory. But the busy hands of the scientists are already fumbling with the keys of all the chambers hitherto forbidden to mankind. Without an equal growth of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love, Science itself may destroy all that makes human life majestic and tolerable. There never was a time when the inherent virtue of human beings required more strong and confident expression in daily life; there never was a time when the hope of immortality and the disdain of earthly power and achievement were more necessary for the safety of the children of men.

After all, this material progress, in itself so splendid, does not meet any of the real needs of the human race. I read a book the other day which traced the history of mankind from the birth of the solar system to its extinction. There were fifteen or sixteen races of men which in succession rose and fell over periods measured by tens of millions of years. In the end a race of beings was evolved which had mastered Nature. A state was created whose citizens lived as long as they chose, enjoyed pleasures and sympathies incomparably wider than our own, navigated the inter-planetary spaces, could look back on the past and foresee the future. But what was the good of all that to them? What did they know more than we know about the answers to the simple questions which man has asked since the earliest dawn of reason—"Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Whither are we going?" No material progress, even though it takes shapes we cannot now conceive or however it may expand the faculties of man, can bring comfort to his soul.

It is this fact, more wonderful than any that Science can reveal, that gives the best hope that all will be well. Projects undreamed of by past generations will absorb our immediate descendants; forces terrific and devastating will be in their hands; comforts, activities, amenities, pleasures will crowd upon them; but their hearts will ache, their lives will be barren, if they have not a vision above material things. And with the hopes and powers will come dangers out of all proportion to the growth of man's intellect, or to the strength of his character or institutions. Once more the choice is offered between Blessing and Cursing. Never was the answer more hard to foretell.

S O S

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by LANG

"AND here is another S O S. Will any friend or relative of Captain Wilfrid Andrews, late of the Wessex Regiment, proceed at once to St. Michael's Hospital, London, where he is lying dangerously injured as the result of a street accident. I will repeat that. Will any friend of Captain Wilfrid Andrews . . . proceed at once . . . where he is lying. . . ."

"I will repeat that." As though there had been any need for the repetition! As though she, Molly Andrews, were ever going to forget the least little accentuation of that high, over-cultured, slightly artificial voice which had struck at her from the loudspeaker less than an hour ago.

Could it be less than an hour since she had heard the loudspeaker's dreadful message? Could it be less than an hour since she had rushed, hatless, to the garage, torn the gates open, started this car?

Why, it seemed like a century since she had jumped into this car. And all through that century she had been telling herself, over and over again as she dodged her way through Outer London. "But it can't be my Wilfrid. It can't."

Yet now, the century was over, and in less than five minutes she would know the truth.

White-faced, the pupils of her blue eyes contracted to needle points, Molly Andrews braked, stopped her engine, dismounted from her driving seat, tottered up the hospital steps.

At the top of the steps was a door. Trembling, she pushed her way through that door. Beyond, at a little desk, stood a man.

She told her name to the man. And after that all the world went grey—cold grey, through which voices whispered. Until, listening to those voices, she realized, and realized irrevocably, the worst.

Then, through the enduring grey she heard her own voice whisper, "Can I see him? Oh, please, can I see him?"

And after that there was no world, only Wilfrid's face.

But she could read no message on that face. For the eyes of it had been closed; and over its ashen cheeks brooded a ghastly serenity. As though not even love could trouble Wilfrid any more.

"And perhaps," she thought, "love doesn't really matter. Perhaps, even if he had left me and gone to Linda, I should have got over it."

But this she would never get over. Never. Because she had loved him so.

Supposing, though, that he'd loved Linda best? But surely he wouldn't have deserted her for Linda? Surely he wouldn't have been so cruel?

For she could not remember it cruel—this face from which sudden death had smoothed away all the perplexities. Wilfrid had never been cruel to her. Not even about Linda. And how straight he had been when she tackled him about Linda. Hiding nothing. Denying nothing. Only asking for time.

And now there was no more time. Now death had solved Wilfrid's riddle for him.

"But not mine," thought Molly Andrews. "Not mine."

At last, her brain still dazed, she turned

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away from Wilfrid. At last, scarcely realizing how she had come there, she found herself outside the hospital.

The sun shone. Traffic was going by. From the club at the corner men came sauntering—just as Wilfrid must have been sauntering, carelessly, when death took him in the street.

Why had Wilfrid been so careless? Why had he let death take him in the street? Had his mind been still obsessed, to the exclusion of all else, with its problem? Or had it been just his usual absent-mindedness?

Absent-minded. That was poor Wilfrid all over. How often she had reminded him that he ought to have some new visiting-cards with his address on them. And now—now she'd never see him, talk with him, never remind him about anything again.

Slowly, Molly Andrews remounted her car. Slowly, she started back for Chislehurst. "Because all my clothes," she kept telling herself, "are at Chislehurst. And because I want Wilfrid buried there. And because I must make arrangements for him to be buried there."

But all the time she knew that she was lying to herself. All the time she knew that there was only one reason—only one real reason—why she was driving back to Chislehurst with Wilfrid lying dead behind her.

"Because he may have written that letter," she knew. "Because he may have posted it before he died."

And as she drove on, faster now and always faster, as the traffic thinned through Outer London, she pictured Wilfrid's face, not dead, but with its eyes open, staring at her, blinking at her, across the lamplight over their dinner table.

"Can I see him?" she whispered. "Oh, can I see him?"

And Wilfrid's lips, too, were open, telling her, and with no evasions, the truth.

"I don't know, my dear," those lips were saying. "I swear to you I don't know. Sometimes I think I'm so much in love with her that I can't do without her; that I simply must ask you to divorce me. And yet at other times I feel I'm not a bit in love with her; that it's just . . . just a passing fancy. And there's never been anything . . . anything wrong between us. You can take that as definite. Absolutely definite. If there had been, I'd tell you."

And "He would have told me," thought Molly Andrews. "He always told me everything. But, oh, how I wish he hadn't told me about Linda! It seems so—so unnecessary, now that he's gone like this."

Why should Wilfrid have gone like this, leaving her in doubt, perhaps in eternal doubt, as to which he loved, herself or Linda? Was it possible he would have asked her to divorce him so that he might marry Linda? Surely not.

But, "If only I could be certain," thought Molly Andrews. "If only I could be absolutely sure!"

With that thought, and that thought only, in her shocked brain she drew brake at her own front door. With that thought, and that thought only harrying her, she faced her anxious household, told them the worst, gave them their few instructions, and went upstairs to pack.

Packing, she decided that she must return to London at once, stay the night at some hotel. But packed, the one thought harried her again. And presently she found herself alone in Wilfrid's study, waiting, waiting, waiting for the postman's step in the drive.

The postman always came at six. She told herself, over and over again, that the postman always came at six. And often, at six, he brought the early postings from London.

So, perhaps, if Wilfrid had written his letter in London, if he had posted it early . . .

And on that she pictured Wilfrid's face again, pictured Wilfrid's not over-resolute eyes blinking as he said, "I don't know. I swear to you, Molly, I don't know. I want a few days to myself. I want to think this thing over. I want to make up my mind. And as soon as I have made up my mind, I'll write to you. That's cowardly of me, I suppose. But I'd—I'd rather write to you. Because, whichever way I decide, I'm bound to hurt somebody. And you know how I hate hurting anybody, especially a woman."

But Linda wasn't a woman. Linda—poor little Linda—was only a girl.

"She's my friend, too," thought Molly Andrews, still waiting for that step on the gravel. "Almost my only friend."

But when the postman's step came at last, when the door bell rang, when one of her maids entered with the salver, as her hand snatched for the only envelope on that salver, there was no friendship for Linda, only hatred of her, in Molly Andrews's mind.

For a long second, her eyes blurring as she read the superscription on that envelope, she balanced it in her hand. For a long second, hatred in every vein of her, she hesitated. Then, with one convulsive movement, she ripped the flap; but even as she did so, even as her eyes took in that first word which Wilfrid had written, the very memory of Linda was wiped from her brain.

For now there was no more need to think of Linda. Only of Wilfrid. Of this dear, dead Wilfrid who had written, "Darling, I've made up my mind at last. And I'm so glad! I've never loved anyone except you. Not really. How could I? You've always been so sweet to me. So wonderful. And I want you. I want you more than words can say. That's why I can't write very much. That's why I can only tell you that I'll be home, really home, almost before you get this. And, oh, my dear, just to lie in your arms again, just to kiss you again, just to know you're really mine again will be more of Paradise than any mortal sinner deserves."

And, "Paradise," thought Wilfrid Andrews's widow, the tears streaming from her. "Is there one? If so, you and I will meet there, Wilfrid darling. Wonderful if we do. Wonderful."

IN which wonderful case, however, it is to be hoped that neither of their spirits will encounter the wraith of a certain young woman who still cherishes, since Fate has left her nothing else to cherish, a letter which begins, "My dear Molly, I hate hurting you. But what else can I do? My feeling for Linda isn't just a passing fancy. It's more than that. Ever so much more. And I must go to her. I simply must . . ."

Unless, of course, the identical Providence which decreed that the absent-minded Wilfrid, before walking absent-mindedly in front of a motor-bus, carrying nothing by which the hospital authorities could identify him except those old visiting-cards, should put his letters in the wrong envelopes, also decrees for him and Linda, wandering still officially separate through eternity, the same discretion which was theirs, until the not over-resolute Wilfrid half let the cat out of the bag under his wife's cross-examination, on earth.

FEED ALICE

"OH, Mugs darling, you are marvellous."

"Oh, Gilbert, you are more marvellous than I, darling."

"Oh, darling, this is the happiest day——"

"Of our lives."

"So far."

"Fancy our being going to get married."

"Sometime."

"Pet."

"Oh, Gilbert, you bad boy," cried the mother of the girl Mugs, coming upon them swiftly round a corner, "don't tell me you are going to steal my little girl! Why need our babies grow up? Why can't we keep them forever? Let's have the wedding soon, while the garden is looking nice, and the refreshments can be in a marquee, and, Mugs, my honey, we will make Daddy buy . . And also, we will make Daddy buy . . . and, oh yes! then we will make Daddy buy. . . . And we will make Daddy. . ."

"You are gaining a son, not losing a daughter," faltered Gilbert, trembling a little at the pace things were going around him, and holding fast to the hand of the girl Mugs.

"You happy little things!" cried Mugs' mother.

"I should like everybody to be happy to-day," sighed the girl Mugs.

"Oh, Gilbert, isn't she sweet? Do you know what a sweet thing you are getting! Go out and tell everybody, pets, and then everybody *will* be happy."

"Yes, start her up, Gilbert," cried the girl Mugs, and so he gave a kick to the starter of his motor-bicycle, and Mugs leapt to the pillion.

For a very short while the mother of Mugs—a modern piece for her years—ran beside them down the drive, crying: "B-b-before you tell the Vic-icar and the blacksmith and the g-g-garage, and your other r-r-relations, don't forget you must t-t-tell Aunt Alice. Remember now, you're so h-h-hap-pappy, Aunt Alice comes first. G-go straight to Aunt Al——" But she soon fell behind, and returned to the house, thinking up a really good thing in the way of weddings.

"Straight to Aunt Alice," cried the girl Mugs, clasping Gilbert around the waist and roaring into his ear.

"Right, girl. Right!"

"But, darlie, we haven't got anything to take her."

"Oh, darlie!"

"Darlie, here's the fish boy in the road. Stop!"

"Right, darlie."

They stopped, lifted from the fish boy a nice cut of salmon destined for somewhere, and drove on. Mugs held the salmon.

"Bit o' luck, sweetums."

"Yes, sweetums. Bit o' luck."

They turned into the straight for Plantagenet village, swept through, and commenced to rush up the hill beyond.

"There's the Vic. walking ahead. Something in his hand."

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT WILKINSON

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" What is it ? "

" Onions ; for Aunt Alice."

They passed the Vicar and the delicate string of onions of his own growing that dangled from his hand, and roared on.

Emerging from a footpath into the road, came a small farmer with the corpse of a small rabbit ; and a yard or two further on the youngest toddler in Plantagenet climbed gallantly, bearing a few late blackberries in its pinafore, and watering at the mouth, but resisting temptation all the same. For it had been taught from the cradle that it was a far, far better thing to minister to poor Miss Alice than to its own infantile greed. Old and young, rich and poor, all Plantagenet ministered to poor Miss Alice.

Gilbert and the girl Mugs darted into the modest driveway of poor Alice's house and spluttered to a stop.

" There she is, lover."

" Got the salmon, lover ? "

" Yes, lover."

They dismounted daintily from the motor-cycle, smoothed their hair, diminished their radiance, and went hand in hand towards the small lawn whereon poor Alice had sat these many summers, looking out at the horizon as if from it she could conjure that which might by some miracle restore her shattered, wasted, blasted, and generally devastated life.

Poor Alice was in her usual large wicker chair ; pale as always, but also—as always—stout ; and, as always, mourning. That she mourned in a silence that could be respected, did not deceive Plantagenet, whose old and young all tried—by simple gifts, taking the shape of food to which it was known she was extremely addicted—to

" Remember," called her mother, breathlessly, " remember Aunt Alice comes first."

By

MAY EDGINTON

bring a brighter light into her fading days.

"I'm almost ashamed to tell her of our happiness, lover."

"Me, too, lover."

"But mother thinks it's always good for her to be told these things, chickie."

"Sure, chickie!"

"You know, boy dearest, that once she loved a man who went away without speaking. The Honourable Hubert Vavasour, and now he is Lord Portler."

"Yes, girl dearest."

"And she never smiled again."

"Thirty-five years without one smile, Baby?"

"Yes, Baby."

"Gosh!"

"If you and I could bring a smile——"

"We'll try, duckling."

"Oh, duckling, you such miracle boy! Sure can do!"

Poor Alice now observed them from the far-distances where her soul lived, and returning from these great open spaces she fixed her eyes judicially upon the cut of salmon.

"Dear Aunt Alice, Gilbert thought——"

"No, Miss Alice, it was Mugs who——"

"Oh, boykins!"

"Now, girl-o!"

They teetered on their feet somewhat, consumed by uncertainties, and during this pause one of the aged servants, who mourned there, too, came out of the house and took the salmon, and observed that it was faintly possible poor Miss Alice might fancy it before it had to be thrown away.

"Good morning," said Aunt Alice at last, sombrely.

"We've something to tell you, Miss Alice," murmured Gilbert.

"We're engaged to be married," cried Mugs.

"Ah, well, people do tell me such things," said poor Alice, dubiously, after a pause.

They watched eagerly for the slightest break in her mask of sorrow; but no.

"We came to tell you first."

"Thank you, my dears."

"We thought it might make you glad."

"Why?"

The girl Mugs sank to the ground in a pretty attitude at poor Alice's feet. Gilbert sank too. The three made a good composition.

"Have you seen *Punch* this week, Aunt Alice?"

"Yes, dear."

"Have you seen *La Vie Parisienne*, Miss Alice?"

"Yes, dear."

"Do you know the joke about the curate and the pig?"

"Yes, dear."

"Didn't it make you laugh?"

"No, dear."

"Our c-c-cook fell downstairs this morning, Aunt-t-ta-talice."

"Indeed, dear?"

The girl Mugs and Gilbert laughed till they sobbed when, recovering, they looked up to see poor Alice once more gazing over their heads into memory's great open spaces.

THE girl Mugs then spoke with a vigour and direction that made Gilbert marvel.

"Aunt Alice. On my last birthday mother told me. She thought I was old enough."

The toddling child arrived with the blackberries, which it held up in its pinafore before Miss Alice.

Alice ate them.

"Yes, auntie, dear," continued Mugs, "I know the details of your tragedy. Gilbert knows, too."

"What Mugs and I want to do, Miss Alice, to celebrate our great joy and good luck and everything, is to make you happier. If there is any little thing, won't you mention it? I mean, isn't there just any one thing you want more than anything else?"

Poor Alice sighed.

"We know what she wants, boykins."

It may have been the disarming spectacle of their youthful happiness that made poor Alice relent towards them a little.

"Just one thing, my dears. Just one thing that I shall never now know."

Gilbert's mind ranged over such possibilities as foreign travel, love of a good man, beauty, power, Old Masters, the hat trick in Derby winners, the patter of little footsteps, and a voice lisping: "Mamma!" when Mugs enlightened him.

"She has waited thirty-five years to hear Lord Portler propose to her; and she has told mother that if she could hear those words it would be the happiest day of her whole life."

Alice bowed her head three times.

"Is that so, Miss Alice?"

"That is so," said poor Alice, and she folded her hands and closed her eyes, tired of the barren spaces.

The child began to bawl and went away.

"Isn't it a great love, boykins?" said the girl Mugs, crying a little, too, as they also crept off.

"Oh, what a great love!" exclaimed Gilbert. "Shall we ever love like that, duckling?"

"We sha'n't need to, duckling. Oh, you such miracle boy, do something!"

The oldest inhabitant entered the gates and crept towards the house with a plate

"Now tell me more about this charming woman," said Lord Portler. "Where does she live?"

of giblets—all he had to offer. The same aged servant came out and took him and the giblets away.

"Do what, Mugs?"

"Oh, anything! Anything as long as it's something."

"Very well, I will."

"Oh, darling!"

"Yes, darling!"

The vicar and the small farmer entered the gate together with the rabbit and the onions, as the motor-cycle dashed out; and over the top of the hill came the form of a mother-of-ten, with the light of all that motherhood in her eyes, and in her hand a cabbage of her own pickling.

"What are you going to do, goosegog dear?"

"I'm going to Lord Portler, goosegog."

"When?"

"Now."

"Where is Lord Portler, sweetums?"

"Said to be at his Norfolk seat."

"O-oh! Oo-o-o-ooh!"

"Your mummy can lend me the photograph you took of Miss Alice in her basket chair, showing just the top of her head."

"Sure, wunnerful boy! Sure!"

In half an hour, then, suit-case behind him instead of the lithe form of Mugs, Gilbert was upon the great highway, flying north-east; arriving at Lord Portler's Norfolk castle while it was still afternoon.

Gilbert dusted himself down daintily, ran a pocket comb through his hair, glanced in a pocket mirror, settled his coat round his hips, and pealed the bell. A fine specimen of a butler took him at once, obviously by some mistake, into a very noble room, where the rear view of a gentleman of goodish age, holding a light but difficult pose, struck the eye.

This was undoubtedly Lord Portler

The best photographer in London had come down to take his photograph, and as Gilbert entered was begging earnestly :—

"Don't turn round, your lordship. Keep the face from us. Your lordship will make a lovely picture from the back."

Gilbert stood silently just within the door, with the butler, who had erroneously taken him for an assistant photographer, now trying to get him away unobserved.

"I have always made a good portrait," said Lord Portler, "front *and* back."

"I am sure, your lordship. Thank you, your lordship. Wonderful! Most successful, I feel certain. Good day, your lordship."

The photographer left, nimbly.

LORD PORTLER turned and saw a young stranger coming towards him, accompanied by the protesting butler.

"Who is this?" said Lord Portler, sadly and gloomily.

"A Mr. Small, my lord."

"Small! Small! . . . You may go, Fortescue."

Lord Portler advanced on Gilbert.

"Small?"

"Yes, Lord Portler."

"What Small?"

"G-G-Gilbert."

"Gilbert hell! Which Smalls are you?"

"Oh—er—we are a Dorset family, Lord Portler."

"There are no Smalls in Dorset."

"Er . . . I beg your pardon. But——"

"There are Smalls in Kent; also—incongruously enough, as I think—on the Welsh border, where a minor branch settled just after the Wars of the Roses. Some Smalls have, I believe, even colonized. *But there are no Smalls in Dorset.*"

"Just as you wish, Lord Portler."

"And now, young man, your business?"

"Er . . . it is about a lady."

"About a lady?" said Lord Portler, and he warmed to a deeper crimson. His colour was very rich.

"A Miss Alice Dawker."

"What Dawkers?"

"Er . . ."

"I don't think there are any Dawkers."

"Er . . . perhaps just a few."

"The fewer the better, of course; the fewer the better. Still, I think you are mistaken about them. Had there been any I should have known."

"Yes, Lord Portler."

"Unless they are new people."

"Miss Alice Dawker——"

"I do not know her."

"You met her before you succeeded to the title; when you were the Honourable Hubert Vavasour."

"Indeed? Indeed. That would be some time ago."

"Thirty-five years."

"What do you know about it? How old were you then?"

"Er . . . I wasn't."

"Quite. And I cannot recall Miss Alice Dawker. But if you are asking my opinion about this member of a family which I do not really believe exists, it is that she should have married by now."

"That, Lord Portler, is what I want to speak about. It is a most beautiful story."

"Story? Have you any new stories?"

"I only have this beautiful story of Miss Alice Dawker——"

"Ring the bell, boy."

Gilbert thought hectically of the girl Mugs and her faith in him.

"Will you not hear me first, Lord Portler?"

"Ring the bell!"

Gilbert rang it. "But, Lord Portler——"

"Fortescue," said Lord Portler, "Mr. Small is staying for a few days. Get the William I. suite ready for him. His things——"

"Er . . . I have brought no things, I fear, Lord Portler."

"Fortescue can attend to the strict necessities. I am glad you can stay. In spite of your haziness about it, I think you are one of the Welsh Smalls. I am sorry for that. It is distinctly not the better branch of the family."

"I am sorry, too."

"Not your fault, boy. Not your fault. Ring the bell again."

Gilbert rang.

"About Miss Alice Dawker, Lord Portler——"

"Ah, your story! Never mind it. I've plenty of stories; more than enough for a boy like you. I shall enjoy telling them. Fortescue!"

"Yes, my lord?"

"I'll see Mr. Small again at dinner."

"Very good, my lord. This way, sir."

Gilbert ascended behind the butler to a very noble suite indeed.

"Dinner is at eight-thirty, sir; and we understand that you will not dress."

"Er—thanks."

"It is a little late to suggest a tea-tray, sir. Perhaps I might mix you a cocktail?"

"Spendid!"

"Side Car, Dubonnet, Bronx, Gloom Raiser, Third Degree, Stinger, Monkey Gland, Bacardi, Apple Jack, Boomerang, Clover Club, Grand Slam, Mule's Kick, Mistinguett, or an Old Fashioned? I suggest that you are a little inexperienced for our brown sherry."

"Mistinguett."

"A touch of caviare, sir? A taste of smoked salmon? An olive? Paté? Salted nuts? Chips? A cheese straw?"

"Er . . . A spot of everything."

Alone in the fine suite, Gilbert looked about him, and was thankful to see a telephone upon a refectory table whereon —it is creditably alleged—the Conqueror once feasted. He felt an urge to commune with the girl Mugs, and in a little matter of a quarter of an hour, got through.

"That you, goosegog?"

"Yes." Her giggle was divine. "Who's that?"

"Goosegog."

"I adore you, darlie."

"Me, you."

"Where are you, teeny?"

"At Lord Portler's. Say, Mugs, I'm doing the business in grim style. You'll be pleased with your teeny. Yes, you will, weeny. But listen. I'm staying here. Ask your mummy's housemaid to pack my suit-case and send it on."

"But, teeny——"

"Weeny, I'm trying to please you. But I must have my clothes out of your Mummy's spare room if I'm to put poor Miss Alice slap bang over."

"All right, honey."

"Brave honey! Boy back soon."

"Darlie, what's it like?"

"Gosh, marvellous! And the butler's lushing me up proud. But there's a mystery about the place."

"Mystery, boykins?"

'Tragedy. Shadow. The old fowl's under some sort of hoodoo. I feel it. Darlie darlie, here's the butler. Me kiss you. Dood night."

"Dood night."

Fortescue entered. "Ah, I hope you find our telephone service adequate, sir."

"Fine."

"I always think the Norman period a bit heavy on the atmospherics, myself. I brought you the shaker, sir."

'Thanks."

"If there's anything else you want, sir, pray ring."

"Well, there's something I'd like to ask you, just as fellow to fellow. . . ."

"Anything, sir, since you put it so nicely Anything."

"It's merely this; what's the matter with the old—his lordship? I gather a sense of death or gloom or crime."

"Well, sir, you speak very sympathetically, I'm sure, and you show yourself very sensitive to atmospherics. I own that I am particularly glad to see us with a bright young visitor to cheer us up at the moment. His lordship seemed eager to have you, too. You may serve to take his lordship's mind off."

"Off what?"

"Ahem! . . . you see, sir, his lordship's doctors have recently got together; and they have united in telling his lordship to Stop It."

"Stop what?"

"Ahem!"

"He looks lonely to me. Hasn't he ever been married?"

"Oh, sir, has he not! Yes, sir, there has been plenty of that, sir. Ample. Both within and without the holy estate, sir, you being, I can see, a sophisticated young gentleman. But the point has been reached when his lordship is to Stop It."

"Then don't you think he'd now be better with just one good woman?"

"His lordship seems somewhat shy of that idea, sir."

Fortescue left the room.

DESCENDING an hour later, Gilbert found Lord Portler regarding a decanter of the old Brown. But he did not take any, and his look was still very, very depressed. He took Gilbert's arm and they proceeded to the dining-room.

"Glad to have you, my boy. Long time since I've seen any of your people, but I'm glad to have you. My own cronies seem to have aged astonishingly. Incredibly. Fogies. Now, Fortescue?"

"You might take a glass of the old Brown with your soup, I think, my lord."

"Mr. Small will take a glass, too."

Gilbert felt as he looked, very young and slender at the vast table in the vast room. He felt inadequate to the task before him, but he kept his mind on poor Miss Alice.

"We'll take champagne after the hock, Fortescue."

"My lord! *Please* stop it!"

"Champagne, Fortescue. This is going to be a good night. Dear lad," he said, turning to Gilbert and already cheering a little, "did you ever hear the story of how, when I was twenty-one, I took the most beautiful woman in London to the Cremorne and what the Duke of Dover said?"

"No, Lord Portler."

"I must tell you that one."

This was a vintage story which lasted through the soup and the sole and the saddle, into the grouse; beginning: "In those days beauties *were* beauties, my boy. Nothing like 'em now. The dresses, my boy! Lovely dresses over ten petticoats and I don't know what. Well, that's a lie. . . . And when I was a young man women respected us and looked up to us."

"Good God! Did they really, Lord Portler."

' Yes, my boy.

Lord Portler passed from fragrant stories of the Cremorne days, to stories of driving his coach with more beautiful women upon it down to the Derby in '80 and '81 and '82. A colourful pageant of old Derby days enriched the room, and, young and slender, Gilbert sat listening, though keeping his mind on poor Miss Alice. Also, as the champagne flowed, Lord Portler mellowed into what may be described as an autumn mood, a mood where rich experience with a bouquet like a rare wine caused the reminiscences to become a little *piano*. He spoke feelingly of the first Lady Portler, and another lady—one of the loveliest in Europe; and then of the second Lady Portler, and another lady, *the* loveliest in Europe. He told Gilbert confidentially what Queen Victoria said about it; and the Prince; and what Gladstone said about it. He continued in perfect rhythm to the third Lady Portler—still living; and married to a duke in Florence now, poor gel!—and another lady, who was the belle of her time though socially clouded. Lord Portler had given all these fair ones wondrous times; in fact, he confided to Gilbert—and

A slight sound caused Gilbert to look up and to perceive the girl Mugs aloft in one tree and her Mummy in another.

here was when Gilbert hoped they were getting near the subject of poor Miss Alice could he but interpolate it—in fact, said Lord Portler, he had been dashed soft with women. Not, added Lord Portler, that women hadn't been dashed soft with him in those fine days when love was love, women were women, men were men, horses were horses, racing was racing, London was London, and life was life. " I would always do anything for a pretty woman," said Lord Portler, softly, " a woman's little woes and troubles were more than national calamities to me. I regarded them as important. I made many women very happy, I like to recall. But," said Lord Portler, firing up, " why do I say ' recall.' I made 'em very happy, and shall again ! And shall again ! "

" Excuse me, my lord," said Fortescue, from the shadows, " but you are to stop it."

" Leave us, Fortescue."

Gilbert now saw his chance.

" I like to hear you say all this, Lord Portler, because——"

Lord Portler held up a hand.

" And yet," said he sorrowfully, but mellowly, " I have ruined many."

" From the modern point of view, they were not ru——"

" They *were* ruined, sir ! " said Lord Portler, firing up.

" I beg your pardon, Lord Portler."

" You must allow me to know."

" Certainly, Lord Portler."

Fortescue crept back.

" Open a bottle of the '74, Fortescue."

" If you please, my lord——"

" Open a bottle of the '74."

Their port glasses were filled.

" There is no romance nowadays," said Lord Portler, firmly.

" Forgive my contradiction, please, Lord Portler, but I want to tell you of one."

" Ah ? Whose ? " said Lord Portler ; but lacklustre.

" Yours, Lord Portler."

" Mine ! "

" Yours ; and Miss Alice Dawker's."

" There are no——"

" Please, Lord Portler, I have driven a long way to find you and tell you."

Struck faintly by the pathos of the boy—born into so ignominious a time—and by the frailty of his physique—so inferior to the physiques of more gorgeous days—Lord Portler conceded a little indulgence.

" Ah ! I remember you said you knew a story."

" Yours and Miss Alice Daw—Miss Alice's."

" Go on, boy," said Lord Portler, but frowningly, for he knew that no new stories worth a connoisseur's hearing had been told since eighteen-ninety-five or thereabouts.

" Miss Alice D. has adored you for thirty-five years. It is one of the big love stories of the world."

LORD PORTLER underwent a great change, which passed through the initial incredulity into gratification and expectancy, not to say happiness. Here he had been—as Gilbert sympathetically understood—sentenced, as it were, to live upon his past, to rake over the last embers of his glory ; and suddenly there was presented to him a romance as fragrant, as beautiful as any that had enriched him, and he was again the central figure. His further interruptions, as Gilbert unfolded the story, were merely in the nature of helpful comment and leading questions.

" Thirty-five years ago, Lord Portler, Miss Alice D. met you at a country house near Plantagenet in Hampshire. She fell rapturously in love with you. She had never before seen such a splendid figure of a man. You were a hero for a girl's imagination."

Lord Portler nodded.

" Your magnetism was unlike—er—anything she had ever experienced. Er—every woman who came near you was—er—crazy about you."

Lord Portler nodded ; and sighed—yet not sadly.

" Er—Miss Alice D. had never loved before, and has never loved anyone else since. Er—according to all I have been told, you seemed—er—while in the neighbourhood—to reciprocate the young girl's affections. You—you—er—expressed your admiration to everyone. You sent daily to London for flowers for her."

" The kind of thing I always do."

" And fruit out-of-season."

" I grudge nothing."

" You played croquet with her every day."

" I always liked to see a pretty woman playing croquet."

" You wrote to her daily and sent the note by hand every morning."

" Even to-day I seldom send such letters through the common post."

" Er—sometimes you wrote in verse."

" Very likely, dear lad."

" All seemed to the girl—and to those around her—to be O.K. The village was ready to ring the church bell and light a bonfire. So I've been told."

" I was no doubt popular."

" Er—thus far you had, however, said nothing definite."

" I was noted for being somewhat evasive in expression. It is a gift."

" And suddenly one spring morning, when all seemed—er—full of hope and everything,

you rushed up to London, became entangled with a lady——"

"A moment, dear lad. I wish I could remember who that might be."

"You—er—left for Madrid—you did not return to Plantagenet. Not another word did Miss Alice D. receive from you——"

Dear lad, I probably thought I had done enough for the young lady."

'You were abroad some time. Five years after you married the first Lady Portler."

Gilbert passed his silk handkerchief over his moist brow.

"And this lady?"

She has simply sat and pined ever since. Er—when once or twice a friend has tried to comfort her or—er—to gain her confidence, all she says is: 'If Hubert would only say he loves me! If Hubert would only come back and ask me to be his wife, I should be the happiest woman alive.' Thirty-five years after she is still—when pressed—saying it."

"Exquisite!"

'You see why I call it one of the big love stories of the world, Lord Portler?"

"*One* of the big ones!"

"Excuse me, Lord Portler. The biggest."

"That is more accurate."

'I would also like to tell you that from that day to this, *she has never smiled.*"

"How beautiful. I have a sense of beauty. Very beautiful indeed. I am glad to think she has never smiled."

'Er—it is very sad.'

'I have always rather admired sadness in women."

"You forgive my intrusion?"

'Dear lad, at a sorrowful time of my life, when I have coarsely and ignorantly been ordered to stop it—by Sir Druce-Druce Carrier, Sir Hanley Stewitt, and Lord Pawson of Denn—you bring me the sweetest and most exquisite thrill that I have ever known. You bring me comfort. You bring me a promise of spring again. I am indebted to you. Have you, by any chance, a photograph of this lady?"

Gilbert drew from his breast pocket his letter-case, and in finding the portrait of Alice—in chair—found also inadvertently the portraits of the girl Mugs and her Mummy.

Lord Portler seized all three firmly.

"In varying mood," said he. He began to dream over the snapshots, dreaming longest over the girl Mugs. "I do not know," said he, "that this is not the most winsome. Windblown and the limbs are very delicate. Then this," he said, looking at the Mummy of Mugs, "this is sweet. And this," he said, looking at the top of poor Alice's head over her wicker chair, "this is—is—is——"

"Intriguing, Lord Portler."

"Intriguing." He returned to Mugs. "Which is most like her?"

"Undoubtedly this one, Lord Portler," said Gilbert, quickly taking back Mugs and her Mummy and leaving Lord Portler with poor Alice.

Lord Portler studied it with care; not to say avidity.

"Perhaps it is the most charming after all, though I like to think she has the other moods—errant and wistful. Her name is Dee? What Dees?"

"No, Lord Portler. I—I abbreviated.

Lord Portler strode towards poor Alice, whose nostrils began to twitch as the odour of the prime love-gift reached her.

Please—er—*please!* Oh! please, her name is Dawker."

"A corruption, of course, of Dawking, now modified into Daw-King. The Daw-Kings' seat is near Stow-on-the-Wold."

"Is that so, Lord Portler?"

"I should like to keep this photograph—unduly reticent though it is."

"Pray keep it, Lord Portler."

"Now tell me more about this charming woman. Where does she live?"

"In the village of Plantagenet, in a house left her by a neighbour who wished to assist her to bear her tragedy."

"She is poor, then?"

"She is very poor."

"I rather like that. When I was a young man, and women—as I told you—were so different, so sweet and loving and looked up to us, they were all very poor. Go on."

"She has two old servants with little annuities and they take no wages because they want to help her to bear her tragedy."

"Nice. I don't at all mind servants having feelings."

"The whole village, rich and poor, old and young, bring her gifts continually; produce from their gardens and from their cows and hens. And rabbits. Because they all want to help her to bear her tragedy."

"*So* beloved?"

"So beloved."

Lord Portler was stirred to the depths.

"You paint me a picture of a most sweet and affectionate woman."

"She is all that, Lord Portler."

"Dear lad, I shall be motoring up to Town to-morrow. Can you go with me? I shall be glad of your companionship."

"I'll be delighted, Lord Portler."

"What you have said makes me very happy. I'm sure I remember Alice Daw-King. A sweet girl. Sweet. I know I treated her callously. However, her years of suffering shall have their reward. She is going to be the most radiant woman in England. And now I will be alone for a little while to think of her. Good night, dear lad, good night."

"Good night, Lord Portler."

Reaching the door, Gilbert was recalled.

' Dear lad, if you are writing to any mutual friend, you might perhaps mention . . . . She should be prepared, I think."

" Oh yes, Lord Portler."

" Joy can be a shock."

Gilbert gained the Conqueror suite and, before he slept, wrote to the girl Mugs.

GILBERT'S suit-case arrived the next day as he and Lord Portler were stepping into the Rolls. A letter had also arrived hours earlier, by first post, from the girl Mugs.

. . . " Cousin Alice seems particularly broody since you left. Mummie thinks she is perhaps telepathic. She has repeated several times : ' If only I could hear Hubert asking me to be his wife ! ' I have taken her some brussels sprouts ; I shall be eager to hear from you, Beauty-Boy."

Gilbert and Lord Portler sat side by side rolling Londonwards.

" I should have started earlier, dear lad," said Lord Portler, " but I had so many orders to give. The bridal suite at the Castle is being uncovered, and cleaned, and if there's time, it will be redecorated."

" Oh splenid, Lord Portler, splendid ! "

" I have wired about the bridal suite in my town house. That will certainly be redecorated, by workmen on night and day shifts."

" Oh, splendid ! splendid ! Shall we—er —drive down to Plantagenet to-morrow ? "

" I fear not till the day after. I should like a Turkish bath and a facial pack, and to see my tailor and bootmaker, and also order some grey satin pyjamas."

" Grey satin ? "

" Well, it is not my first wedding. Besides, I have used all the other colours. And then, dear lad, after I have attended to all that, I have to see the Bish."

" The Bish ? "

" Bish of Mayfair. He did one of my services before, and there's no doubt but that women like ceremonial. I shall probably ask the Bish of Middlesex to assist him ; and I believe there is a Colonial one—actually related to the Daw-Kings—now home on furlough. We will have the three."

" Oh, Lord Portler ! " cried Gilbert, reverently.

For awhile Gilbert dallied with the idea of saying to Mugs' Mummy : " Let us hurry up, and see if the old fowl won't agree to a double wedding ; because there's a chance of Mugs and me getting three jolly old Bishops for nothing." But not wishful to complicate affairs in any way, unselfishly he refrained from putting the suggestion to his lordship.

They found Portler House already in possession of expert workmen and artists, while his lordship's shirtmaker was waiting to submit patterns of grey satin. And they rang up Bishops, who were all obliging.

However, Fortescue, who had travelled up, too, saw to it that they sat down punctually to dinner.

" I shall take poor Alice a little gift, dear lad," said Lord Portler, " for I understand from you that she is most delightfully in need of bare necessities."

" A jolly old hamper——"

" Dear lad, too ordinary ! Fortescue will telephone to Scotland for a haunch of venison to be put on the Edinburgh Express."

" Oh, fine ! No one else has been able to give her venison."

" There will be other things, of course."

To say that next day his lordship set about his nuptial preparations in fine earnest would be understating the matter. Neither he, Gilbert, nor staff, had an unoccupied minute. Apprised secretly by Fortescue that his lordship seemed to have no intention of stopping it, Sir Hanley Stewitt telephoned drastically, and so did Pawson of Denn ; and, immediately after, Sir Druce-Druce Carrier ; but they professed themselves unanimously reassured when they heard that he proposed to devote the rest of his life quietly to just one good woman.

" To-morrow," Gilbert found a moment to telegraph the girl Mugs, " we shall be with her."

SO, in the Rolls, down to Plantagenet. It was a sweet day, red and autumnal, and his lordship carolled like a bird. At intervals he studied poor Alice's photograph, in which, despite its reticence, after the manner of a lover he continually found some new perfection.

" How much farther, dear lad ? "

" We're getting there ! We're getting there ! See the beech-wood on the left. And there's the jolly old church tower. Hark ! "

The pealing of the bell came to them on the air.

" You're expected, Lord Portler."

" Very nice of the people, I'm sure. Charming spirit."

They passed a group of schoolchildren drawn up beside the road, who saluted and curtsied.

" See ! Lord Portler, how they love her ! Why, gosh ! look at people running across the turnip field to get to the bottom of her garden and cheer ! "

" Very nice of the people, I'm sure," said his lordship, looking right and left.

They swept to the foot of the hill leading to Alice's house above the village of Plantagenet.

The youngest toddler ascended the hill painfully, bearing in its hands a brown egg, having been taught that the brown nourishes better than the white. Finding such a one in the nest of its own private hen, the toddler was carrying this to poor Miss Alice. A few selfish juvenile tears dripped down its face, for it was yet piggish and had not so far admitted—unless unfairly pressed by authority—the full and true beauty of sacrifice. Still, it bore the egg along generously and well.

"See, Lord Portler, even a little child——"

"Oh, very touching. I have seen nothing like this for years. Throw sixpence to the little fellow. Thanks, dear lad . . . She is *so* beloved ?"

"One child, one egg—nothing ! You haven't seen the half."

"That's a very Britannic figure near the top of the hill, dear lad."

It was Mother-of-ten, with a fresh baking of rock cakes.

"One of the humble village women, Lord Portler."

"Ah, I will bow to her. Good-day, my good woman."

The Rolls edged into the ditch the Vicar, who, with a little pot of home-made jam, was also climbing.

"The Vicar, Lord Portler."

"Good-day ! Good-day, Vicar ! It might please him to help the Bishop ? We shall arrange."

"Bunting, Lord Portler ! "

"God bless my soul ! "

"They've made an archway over her gate ! It has 'Welcome' on it in white calico lettering."

They rolled through poor Alice's gateway to the cheers of following Plantagenet.

They alighted. A slight irreverent sound caused Gilbert to look up and to perceive the girl Mugs aloft in one tree and her Mummy in another. Though unobtrusive, they were missing nothing. The turnip field to the south was dotted with honest well-wishers, and behind every bush lurked glad people. The church bell rang like mad.

The chauffeur was handing out the haunch of venison on a basket tray, and its perfume rose on the air.

"I will carry that myself," said Lord Portler. "Where is she ? "

"Look, Lord Portler ! Look—there ! on the lawn in the wicker chair, waiting ! Waiting as she has always waited——"

"Fall back, dear lad."

The chauffeur handed out a case of champagne, and the footman handed out a basket of peaches to the aged servants who hurried expectantly from the house. But Lord Portler was striding towards poor Alice, whose nostrils had begun to twitch as the odour of the prime love-gift reached her. And all hidden Plantagenet prayed to see that smile for which they had hoped so long.

ALICE had barely taken three good sniffs before she turned her head and saw Lord Portler actually standing beside her. A glorious change swept her face; light came into it ; her eyes gleamed, and then at last she smiled. Yes, she was illumined by a divine smile of purest happiness. Her joy radiated from her so that people hidden in the vicinity could scarce keep back a premature cheer. And Lord Portler looked on this sweet woman who was so happy because of him, and who sat there breathlessly waiting ; beatifically smiling.

He meant that his first words should be the ones for which she had prayed and yearned, and he uttered them at once.

"This is Hubert, Alice. The suspense is over, dear. You have been wonderful. Will you be my wife ? "

"No thank you, Hubert," said Alice, "that would be my idea of Gehenna." And then she roared.

THE LETTERS OF Charles Dickens TO HIS OLDEST FRIEND

We left Dickens in the middle of a letter to Thomas Beard, written from Niagara, describing his voyage to America on board the steamer *Britannia*, in January of 1842. His wife was with him and also her maid Anne. The last sentence in our last number was full of many Hoorays at the thought of coming home. Now he goes on :—

> You will naturally enquire about the medicine chest—Oh! Shade of Sir Humphry Davy!—if you could only have seen me, Beard, endeavouring (with that impossible pair of scales, and those weights, invisible to the naked eye) to make pills in heavy weather, on the rolling Atlantic! If you could only have seen me, when Kate and Anne were deadly fearful of shipwreck—bent on raising their spirits by means of calomel, and ringing the changes on all the bottles in the Mahogany box to restore their peace of mind! Anne struck at last. She objected to take any more pills, powders, or mixtures, "unless she knew what was inside of 'em." This stipulation did not please me by any means for two reasons—firstly, because it implied the absence of that blind reliance and faith which are essential to all great cures: and secondly, because I didn't always know myself. She made distant allusions, too, to having her wages "ris"—and to physic not being in her articles of engagement. I therefore stopped short; but sometimes in that unsettled state of body which fast travelling engenders she asks for physic—and then—then—I give it her. No half measures. Strong and plenty of it.
>
> This is the only place we have had to ourselves since we left home. We came here last Tuesday: and stay until next Wednesday morning. Directly I arrived, I yearned to come over to the English Side, and ordered the Ferryman out, in a pouring rain, for that purpose. It fortunately happens that there really is no point of view to see the Falls from, properly, but this. They are under our windows. But in any case I should have come here. You cannot conceive with what transports of joy I beheld an English Sentinel—though he didn't look much like one, I confess, with his boots outside his trousers and a great fur cap on his head. I was taken dreadfully loyal after dinner, and drank the Queen's health in a bumper—in Port, too, and by no means bad Port—the first I had put to my lips, since leaving home.
>
> I was not sick for more than five or six days coming out. We had a terrible passage—had our paddle boxes torn off, and life boats broken to pieces—and were under water: wet, and leaking through every seam and crevice, the whole time. The agent at Liverpool came on board with me, and politely begged on the part of the owners, that I would live in the

Ladies' cabin, which was the best on board. As there were only four ladies in all, we were very comfortable. I ordered dinner, and carved in great state every day. At night, we always had a rubber—Love points, half-crown bets. We had the doctor down to play, regularly, and every night the Captain appeared at half after ten, and we drank mulled wine together very jovially. I effected various improvements in the cabin: made it very tidy; invented new drinks; suggested the introduction of hot collops for lunch; and was admitted even by the initiated stewardess to be a great acquisition to her society.

I only recollect one amusing circumstance in my sickness. One day—it's impossible to say how I got there—I found myself on deck—the ship, now on the top of a mountain, now in the bottom of a deep valley. It was blowing hard: and I was holding on to something—I don't know what. I think it was a pump—or a man—or the cow. I can't say for certain, which. My stomach, with its contents, appeared to be in my forehead. I couldn't understand which was the sea and which the sky: and was endeavouring to form an opinion, or a thought, or to get some distant glimmering of anything approaching to an idea, when I beheld, standing before me, a small figure with a speaking trumpet. It waved, and fluctuated, and came and went, as if smoke were passing between it and me, but I knew by its very good-natured face, that it was the captain. It waved its trumpet, moved its jaws, and evidently spoke very loud. I no more heard it than if it had been a dumb man, but I *felt* that it remonstrated with me for standing up to my knees in water—I was, in fact, doing so. Of course I don't know why. Sir, I tried to smile. Yes, such is the affability of my disposition that even in that moment I tried to smile. Not being able to do so, and being perfectly sensible that the attempt had faded into a sickly hiccough, I tried to speak—to jest—at all events to explain. But I could only get out two words. They bore reference to the kind of boots I wore and were these—"cork soles." I repeated in the feeblest of voices, and with my body all limp and helpless—"cork soles"—perhaps a hundred times (for I couldn't stop: it was a part of the disease). The captain, seeing that I was quite childish, and for the time a maniac, had me taken below to my berth, and when consciousness returned I was still saying to myself, in a voice that might have melted a heart of sheer steel—"cork soles—cork soles!"

Soon after this, we had a terrible gale at night. Indeed I believe that gale drove my sickness away. At all events, there were, in the Ladies' Cabin (which adjoined our little state room, the size whereof was something smaller than one of those cabs

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Dickens's stateroom in the "Britannia" on his first visit to America. The humours and perils of the voyage he graphically describes in a letter now published for the first time.

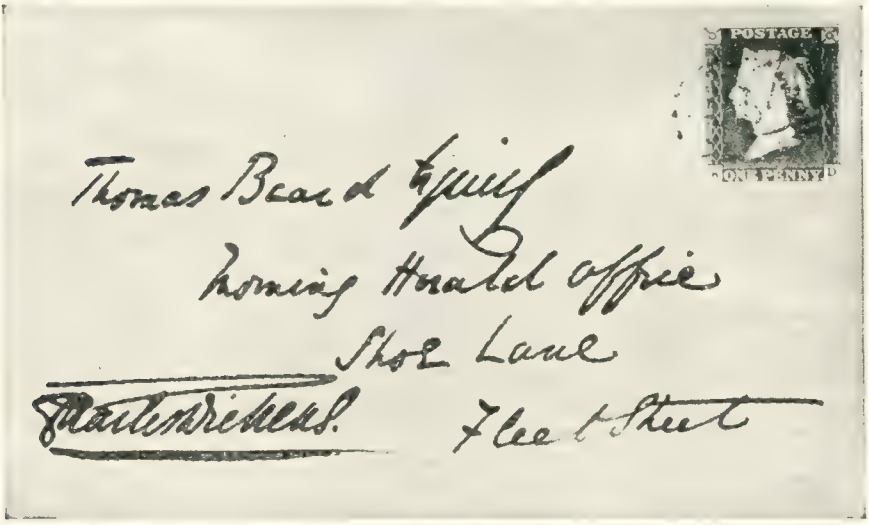
with the door behind), Kate, Anne, and a little Scotch lady—all in their night dresses, and all nearly mad with terror. It was blowing great guns: the ship was rolling from side to side with her masts in the water at every plunge: and the lightning streamed through the skylight awfully. I could do no less, of course, than try to comfort them: and the first thing that occurred to me was Brandy and water. Now all along this cabin was a great fixed sofa—built so as to form a part of it: and running the whole length. They were all three heaped together at one end of this sofa, when I appeared with the jorum of grog in my hand. Just as I was administering it to the lady who happened to be at the top of the live bundle, the vessel rolled, and to my horror and astonishment they all went to the other end of the couch. By the time I staggered to that end, there came another roll, and they all tumbled back to the other—as if they were in an otherwise empty omnibus, and two giants were tilting it by turns at either end. I dodged them, perhaps for half an hour, without catching them once, with nothing on but a pair of rough trousers and that blue jacket I used to wear at Petersham. And in all the misery of the time I had a keen sense of the absurdity of my position which I cannot, even now, surpass.

The incidents of the "cork soles" and the three sliding ladies on the sofa both occur in "American Notes" written when he got home again, but I think they seem better in this ebullition of high spirits for the benefit of his friend. Apart from the tremendous gale, the voyage was not without incident, for, almost at the end of it, the ship stuck on a mud bank in Halifax Harbour and there was much excitement and firing of rockets before the exact situation was discovered.

Dickens left America early in June, and his next letter to Beard is dated July 11th, 1842. The letter is short and on a small matter of business, but its last sentence must not be left out.

> You are acquainted with the business that kept me away from "The Chronicle" last Saturday. George Cruikshank came home in my phaeton, on his head—to the great delight of the loose midnight Loungers in Regent Street. He was last seen taking Gin with a Waterman.

It is only possible to guess to what this refers. Forster mentions that the home-coming was celebrated by a Greenwich dinner at which Cruikshank was present with Talfourd, Maclise, Stanfield, Hood, Barham, Captain Marryat and one or two other friends. I imagine that the drive back to London was from this dinner. I also imagine that it was not nearly so bacchanalian as alleged. Dickens was a most temperate man, but he revelled in the picturing of convivial scenes; he enjoyed the making of punch, or even the thought of making it, much more than the drinking of it, and I am



An example of the custom of Charles Dickens of signing the envelopes which contained his letters to Thomas Beard.

sure his face shone over it as did Mr. Micawber's. Cruikshank, who was twenty years older than Dickens, illustrated "Oliver Twist" and also the "Memoirs of Grimaldi" which Dickens edited. When he was an old man, after Dickens's death, he put forward some quite unsubstantiated claims to having suggested the story of "Oliver Twist."

Ten days later, from Devonshire Terrace, Dickens is sending Beard a typically cheerful invitation to another dinner.

> I have consulted Mr. Groves of Charing Cross. His suggestive mind gave birth to this remarkable expression: "then why not consider this here breast o' wenson off —and let me git another prime 'un in good eatin' order for you, for Sunday week? What—" continued Mr. Groves—"is the hodds to a day?"
>
> Mr. Groves slapped a piece of venison as he spoke with the palm of his hand: and plainly signified by his manner no less than by his words, that this was wisdom. What do you say to it?—and what your sister?
>
> Faithfully Always
> CHARLES DICKENS.
>
> If I don't swim this autumn, may I—but we will not anticipate.

A letter dated the 18th December in the same year shows Dickens trying to buy anonymously a picture by his great friend Daniel Maclise.

> I want your help in a pious fraud—such a pious one, that I have no doubt you will give it me.
>
> I am very anxious for many reasons, to possess a little picture which Maclise is at this minute painting: and I know very well that if I were to say so, he would either insist upon giving it to me or would set some preposterous price upon it, which he can by no means afford to take. Now I think I may purchase it without his knowing I am the purchaser; and if I can, he is a cleverer fellow than I take him to be (highly as I estimate his abilities), if he can ever return the money to me afterwards.
>
> Behold my project.
>
> I want you to write him a note, and say that Mr. So and So of such and such a place in Sussex—one of your country friends—is enthusiastic in his admiration of him, and is very anxious to possess a small picture (he can't afford a large one) of his painting. That he has commissioned you to ask him what he has now by him, and has empowered you to purchase: any subject with *one* figure in it. That you have spoken to me on the subject, and I have mentioned privately to you, his having a most charming picture of a girl at a Waterfall. That you wish to buy the girl at the Waterfall forthwith: that you will take it as a personal favor, if he will sell you the girl at the Waterfall. And that you are prepared to give him money *down* for the girl at the Waterfall, if he will let you know what sum you shall forward to him as her ransom from his damned uncomfortable studio.
>
> A hundred, or a hundred and fifty guineas, will most likely be the mark. If you can only buy it, I will give you the needful instantly wherewith to close the bargain; and a hundred and fifty thousand thanks in.
>
> All minor points I leave to your discretion—I suppose you *an't* at home, and *couldn't* dine here to-day at half-past five —could you?

George Cruikshank, the first illustrator of "Sketches by Boz" and "Oliver Twist."

We know from Forster that this pleasant plot succeeded and Maclise did not discover the name of the buyer for some time. When he did he tried to give the money back and

The portrait of Dickens, aged twenty-six, by George Cruikshank, referred to in the letter reproduced on the opposite page.

Dickens steadfastly refused to take it. Yet Maclise won in the end by painting a picture of Mrs. Dickens as a present a little later. There was a particular reason for Dickens's wanting this picture. Not only was the girl by the waterfall a member of his own family, but this waterfall of St. Knighton was an incident in a delightful holiday in Cornwall, taken after his exertions in America. Maclise, Stanfield, the sea-painter, and Forster were his companions, and Dickens's own description of the trip to another friend was that they laughed all the time: "It would have done you good to hear me —I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way."

In July, 1843, Dickens is asking Beard to come down to Broadstairs for a holiday.

You know who has always treated you successfully, and you know where that great physician is to be found, during the months of August and September. Kate agrees with me that to make your cure complete, there would be nothing like eight undisturbed weeks at Broadstairs with that distinguished man. Now, do think of this. There are a hundred things you could do for the paper on the Margin of the Sea—abstracting Parliamentary reports, and so forth—matters of great use in the recess. The bedroom you had last year, is ready for you. The bathing machine beckons its wooden finger, and cocks its preposterous eye on the sands. The tide rushes in, demanding to be breasted. Dick is all joviality, and very brown in the face from northern toasting. Mac swears "he'll swim to the Goodwin Sands if HE will—there!" Forster asserts with dignified emphasis that "it is the very sort of thing, my dear boy, that Beard requires to set him on his legs." Timber makes himself as unlike a dog as possible, in confirmation of these sentiments. Topping forgets even "Mount Consumious" at the Surrey Zoological Gardens (his crack subject just now) and overhearing these discussions, sadly remarks to me that "a little pickling would make Mister Beard wot he used to be wen we was down at whats-his name"—meaning Petersham—in short, everything and everybody are decisive on the subject: so take the Sussex card off your Portmanteau and label it afresh Pashangermarjit.

Timber, the dog, occurs in several letters about this time, and so does Topping, who was the coachman. Mac was Maclise.

The correspondence contains nothing of particular interest for a year, and then there is nothing very important in the letter itself; but on the back of the envelope is written: "It is particularly requested that if Sir James Graham should open this, he will not trouble himself to seal it." This now recondite allusion is to an event that made a great stir at the time. Graham was the Home Secretary, and had ordered letters to Mazzini and other people of a revolutionary turn of mind to be opened in order to see whether plots were hatching. It was

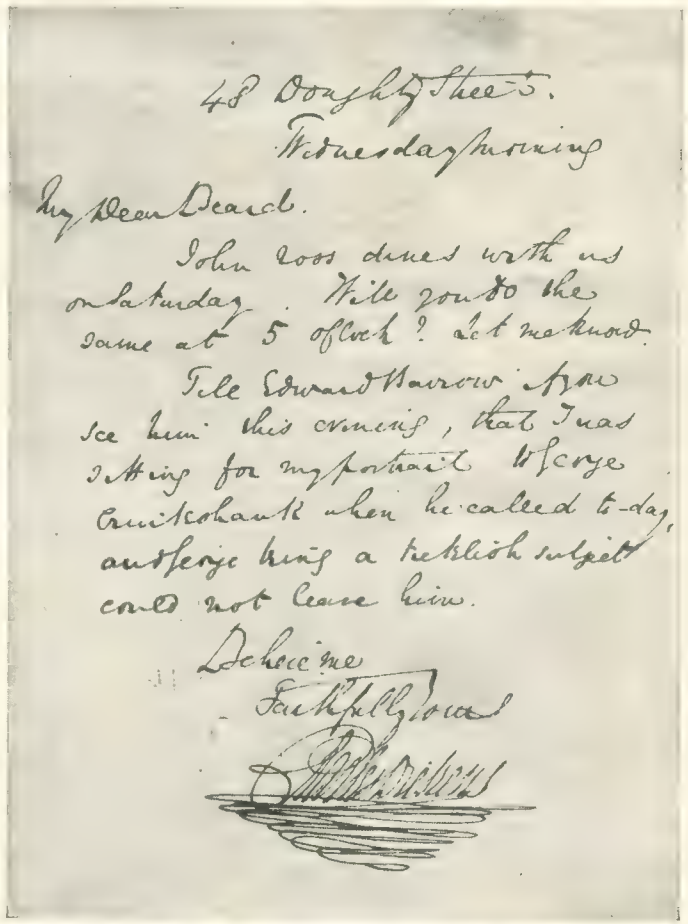
a strictly legal action. Graham's predecessor had done the same thing, and he himself had done it only at the request of Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary; but Lord Aberdeen seems to have left him in the lurch and he was vigorously assailed on all sides. It was just the kind of thing to arouse Dickens's generous if not always reasonable indignation.

Nearly another year goes by and we find Dickens with his family in Italy. He had been worried over a variety of things and had suddenly decided to move abroad bag and baggage. "Martin Chuzzlewit," later acclaimed as one of the greatest of his books, had been, by comparison with his earlier ones, only a *succès d'estime*, and this was the more bitter because he himself thought it "immeasurably the best of his stories till then." "A Christmas Carol" had had a wonderful reception, but the business arrangements had not been satisfactory, and he had been thoroughly disappointed with the money he made. He was irritated with his publishers and generally harassed and uneasy; with a rapidly increasing family he felt that he must retrench and live cheaply, and he also longed for a wider experience of foreign countries. In July, 1844, he set out for Genoa, and except for one flying visit home he stayed in Italy till June, 1845. It was in Genoa that he wrote his Christmas story, "The Chimes." For some time he felt strange there, missed London, and could not settle to work; then he thought of his title and all was well. "Let them clash upon me now," he wrote, "from all the churches and convents in Genoa, I see nothing but the old London belfry I have set them in." This letter is from the rooms which he hired in an enormous palace at Genoa, and is written nearly at the end of his stay when he is aching to get home again. The "last one" mentioned in the letter is his fifth child, Francis Jeffrey, otherwise the "Chicken Stalker," born in 1844.

Palazzo Peschiere,
Genoa,
Twentieth May 1845.

My dear Bardolph,

This is to give you notice and require you, from and after the end of this next coming month of June, to be and hold yourself in readiness to eat and drink a Sunday Dinner at No. 1, Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regents Park, London, on the receipt of a brief and hasty slip of paper, signed, sealed and delivered by the writer hereof. Said writer purporting to leave the sunny clime of Italy (respec-


48 Doughty Street.
Wednesday morning
My dear Beard.
John Leech dines with us on Saturday. Will you do the same at 5 o'clock? Let me know.
Tell Edward Barrow I saw him this evening, that I was sitting for my portrait to George Cruikshank when he called to-day, and George being a ticklish subject could not leave him.
Believe me
Faithfully yours
Charles Dickens

One of the disadvantages of sitting for one's portrait. Dickens describes Cruikshank as "a ticklish subject," and is compelled to miss seeing a friend.

ting which clime, much Gammon is afloat among the subjects of her Britannic Majesty) very early in June next: and to return to his native and admiring country, by the Pass of the Great St. Gothard, and the river of the Rhine.

I take it for granted, my dear Beard, that you have occasionally declaimed, with mingled vehemence and misgiving against the apparently oblivious memory of the humble individual who has now the honour to——. But the life I have led, roaming from place to place and scene to scene—the objects I have crammed and crowded into my inimitable mind—the gentlemanly vagabond I have been, for the last six or eight months—the extraordinary beds I have slept in—and the bewildering amount of fleas, mosquitoes, bugs, and other insects I have unwillingly bepastured—these things have hardly left me any leisure in my holiday, until within the last four or five weeks. During the whole of which time, I have been employed chiefly in lying on my back on sofas, and leaning out of windows and over balconies, in a sort of mild intoxication.

Some of the many things I have seen, and many delights I have had (Venice at their head: and the mournful Roman Campagna shining like moonlight through them all) shall be yours over a glass of average good claret and a "light cigar." (On reflection I think that if I mean that for a quotation, it ought to be "Guitar," but never mind). I wish you could smoke one with me here. The house is considerably larger than Whitehall: and the great room is fifty feet high, and painted all over. It stands in the midst of Terrace Gardens—overlooks the towers and steeples of the town and comprehends beyond them, the whole blue range of the Mediterranean. There is a perfect forest of orange trees below the windows: which are now in blossom: and the air is sleepy with their fragrance.

Moreover there is a marble bath below stairs, from which in all weathers, cold or warm, wet or dry, the heels of the Inimitable B may be beheld protruding as the clock strikes 8 every morning.

But I don't intend to be descriptive. I reserve myself. So do Charley and his two sisters: who will rather astonish you, I think, with sundry Polka, Mazurka, and other fine performances. The last one (boy, I mean) is decidedly a success—a perpetual grin is on his face: and the spoon exercise is amazing.

From the pen drawing in the Forster Bequest.

An amusing caricature by Thackeray of Dickens and his companions on his holiday tour in Cornwall after his first American visit.

Left to right: Daniel Maclise, the portrait painter; Clarkson Stanfield, the sea painter; Dickens; and John Forster, afterwards his biographer.

Some time after getting home he is asking Beard to dinner and writing of a pony he thinks of trying, with a postscript in the language of Mr. Mantalini.

Will you dine with us on Sunday—alone? I have made a purchase of port which I should like you to taste. It is *raythe*r uncommon.

I am riding at present a pony which is something too slight for me. A friend of Topping's has a cob (warranted sound) rising six year old, and price £20—described as a good trotter and everything about him "in a concatination accordingly." He is in an awfully rough state at this minute, but curry-combable, of course. I should like to know what you say about him. If Topping brought him up to you about 10 or 11 to-morrow morning, would you give me your opinion—inspect and try?

Faithfully always,
CHARLES DICKENS

I don't care about his being "demnition fast" as long as he can *keep on*.

"The Waterfall," by Daniel Maclise, which Beard bought secretly on Dickens's behalf. The scene of the painting is St. Knighton's Cove, Cornwall, and the figure is Georgina Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law.

Two letters of November, 1845, and January, 1846, are typical letters of this period. They refer to perhaps the only enterprise of his life in which Dickens definitely failed. This was the *Daily News*, of which the first number appeared on January 21st, 1846, with Dickens as the first Editor. The democratic ideals of the new paper appealed to him, as naturally did the salary of two thousand pounds a year, but his was not the temperament to stand the vexations and high pressure of life on a daily paper, and the first of these two letters alludes to financial difficulties which had depressed him and diminished his first ardour before the paper came out. The second letter shows that he was attending to a subject on which he knew everything, that of the ways and means of reporting, and had entered into a working arrangement with Beard's paper.

Devonshire Terrace,
Tuesday Fourth November
1845

There was a failure of a great Broker in the city last night, which so affects two of my principle people that the Paper *cannot be* on any proper footing.

You may conceive that after laying aside all my usual and dear pursuits for this object, I have been a little shaken for half an hour. But never say die is the Inimitable's motto: and I have already pumped up as much courage as will set

me going on my old track, please God, in four and twenty hours.

Offices of The Daily News,
Whitefriars,
Sixteenth January 1846

There is a meeting at Norwich on Tuesday night—a free trade meeting—which has this novelty that Wodehouse (I think that's the way to spell his name: it looks like a Saxon God's) has challenged Cobden to a discussion, and they will go at it like a couple of Crichtons. We are all powerful on that Railway, and mean, if possible, to have a special train in which our man or men can come up long before the mail—write out, on the way—and give us his or their couple of columns or so, in time for the first Edition. I don't think we should do this, but for a preliminary splash: and it is possible, therefore, that you may not think it worth while to join. But in the spirit of the alliance I think it right to tell you exactly what we mean to do.

He was not to write many more letters from Fleet Street; for on February 9th, less than three weeks after the first number, he resigned, "tired to death and quite worn out," and determined on another sojourn abroad, this time in Switzerland, where he would write another book (Dombey) in the old numbers. The next letter is accordingly from Geneva, dated October 21st, 1846, and contains one of the most spontaneous and delicious bits of description that he ever wrote.

There are two men standing under the balcony of the hotel in which I am writing, who are really good specimens, and have amused me mightily. An immense Frenchman, with a face like a bright velvet pincushion—and a very little Englishman, whose head comes up to about the middle of the Frenchman's waistcoat. They are travelling together. I saw them at Mont Blanc, months ago. The Englishman can't speak a word of French, but the Frenchman can speak a very little English, with which he helps the Englishman out of abysses and ravines of difficulty. The Englishman, instead of being obliged by this, condescends, good humouredly, to correct the Frenchman's pronunciation — patronises him—would pat him in the head, if he could reach so high—and screeches at his mistakes. There he is now, staggering over the stones in his little boots, and falling up against a watchmaker's window, in perfect convulsions of joy, because the beaming giant, without whom he couldn't get a single necessity of life, has made some mistake in the English language! I never saw such a fellow. The last time I met them was at the other end of the Lake by Chillon, disembarking from the steamer. It is done in little boats: the water being shallow close in shore and, in the confusion, the Giant had got into one boat, and the dwarf in another. A hairy sailor on board the steamer found the Dwarf's great coat on deck, and gave a great roar to him; upon which the Dwarf, standing up in the boat, cried out (in

Marley's ghost appears to Scrooge—a scene from "A Christmas Carol," drawn by John Leech.

English): 'Put it down. Keep it. I shall be back in an hour." The hairy sailor of course not understanding one word of this, roared again, and shook the coat in the air. "Oh you damned fool!" said the Dwarf (still in English). "Oh you precious jackass! Put it down, will you?" The Giant, perceiving from the other boat what was the matter, cried out to the hairy sailor what it was necessary for him to know, and then called to the Dwarf, "I have tell him to cap it!" I thought the Dwarf would have died with delight. "Oh, my God!" he said to himself. "You're a nice man! Tell him to cap it, have you? Yes. Yes. Ha ha ha!—cap it, indeed! Oh Lord!"—and never left off chuckling till he landed.

Old Fezziwig stands out to dance "Sir Roger de Coverley" with Mrs. Fezziwig—a scene at Mr. Fezziwig's Ball from "A Christmas Carol," drawn by John Leech.

Those who know "Our Mutual Friend" will be reminded of the conversation between Mr. Podsnap and the foreign gentleman. "The Constitution Britannique," Mr. Podsnap explained as if he were teaching an infant school, "We say British. But you say Britannique, you know (forgivingly, as if it were not his fault)!" This lash must fall on the backs of many of us when we regard, dispassionately, our attitude towards foreigners and foreign languages.

In March, 1848, Dickens is at home again and bidding Beard come to a "solemn Dombey dinner," and three months later there is yet another typically jovial invitation to the seaside.

My dear Mus'r Beard,

We have, for a novelty, fixed as our autumnal-abiding place, on

(I must go over leaf to write it)

BROADSTAIRS!!

—where, in a larger house than usual, is a bed (and bedstead) perpetually at your service, and where you are expected every Saturday for the next eight or ten weeks.

In a postscript he adds: "Poor Fanny still lingers on, to the amazement of all the Doctors and all who see how worn and wasted she is"—This was his eldest sister, Mrs. Burnett, a musician. When, as a boy he was working in the blacking factory, he went to see Fanny receive a prize at the Royal Academy of Music, and broke into tears at the thought of himself "beyond the reach of all such honourable emulation and success."

Two months later he writes that "poor Fanny is to be buried to-morrow," and adds: "I begin to think, like the monk who spoke to Wilkie [Collins] that we are the shadows, and pictures the more robust realities."

(A further selection from the "Letters of Charles Dickens to His Oldest Friend" will appear in the next issue.)

MAKE-BELIEVE

By IAN HAY

IT was New Year's Eve in Broxborough, and all the principal characters in this story were standing before their respective mirrors contemplating their own reflections—an exercise always conducive to introspection—and exploring the immediate future.

The immediate future comprised, for all of them but one, the Grand Amateur Cabaret Show, which was to be held that night at The Old Hall, 27, Windlesham Road (By Kind Permission of Sir Percy Jobling, K.B.E.), in aid of the New Annexe to the Cottage Hospital. Tickets, including Supper at Ringside Tables, One Guinea. Fancy Dress Optional. Cabaret under the Direction of Mr. Cuthbert Summers, the Well-Known West-end Producer.

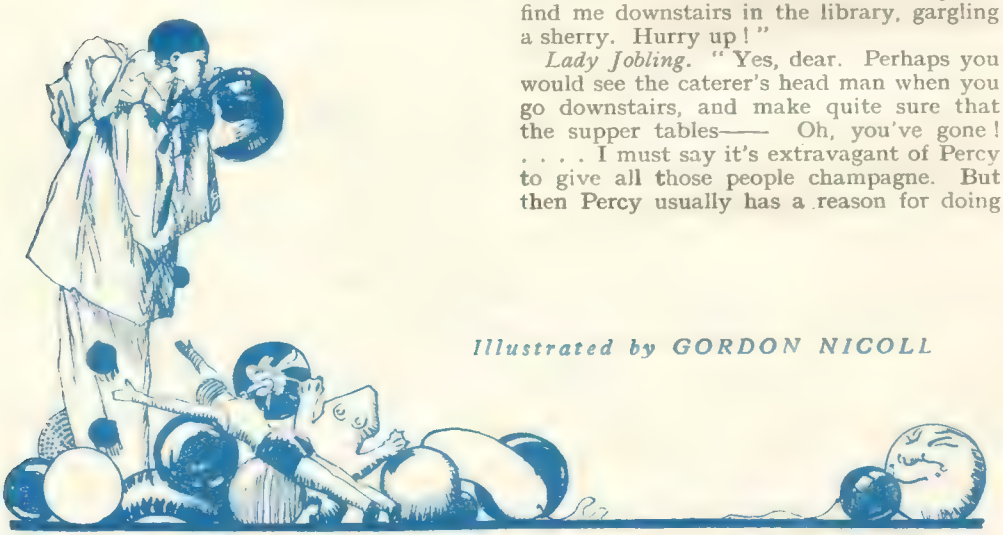
In other words, Broxborough was going it.

Let us take these individuals in the order of their local importance, and listen in to their thoughts, spoken and unspoken.

Sir Percy Jobling. (*You must understand that Lady Jobling is submissively adjacent through an open door.*)

"You'd better wear all your diamonds, Martha. They're a mixed lot—the company, I mean, not the diamonds—especially since the Honourable Denis Portmore was unavoidably prevented; but as we are out to give a treat to the Hoy Polloy we may as well make a job of it. I shall wear a white waistcoat, and I'm giving them champagne for supper. Not our own stuff, of course. I picked up some stuff in the City this morning; I should hate to tell them what I paid for it. How many people are you expecting? A hundred and twenty? Say three to a bottle; that's all they're entitled to at the price, even if it is non-vintage. That will be forty bottles. I only ordered three dozen, so Garrett must be careful. Well, you'll find me downstairs in the library, gargling a sherry. Hurry up!"

Lady Jobling. "Yes, dear. Perhaps you would see the caterer's head man when you go downstairs, and make quite sure that the supper tables—— Oh, you've gone! . . . . I must say it's extravagant of Percy to give all those people champagne. But then Percy usually has a reason for doing



Illustrated by GORDON NICOLL

these things. Politics, I expect, or something like that. . . . I hope everything will be all right to-night. It would never do in our position for anything to go wrong, but you never know what caterers' waiters won't do. I must be sure and remind Garrett to open all the wine himself . . . I wonder how Marjie's cabaret show will go. I'm sure we never dreamed of such things when I was twenty-one. Those costumes! I wonder if the Vicar has seen his daughter's. . . . Then there's that Miss Thingamy, that's coming to make the girls up. I wonder if she's quite—you never know with these Bohemians. They say she was once in a theatre chorus. It must be true, or she wouldn't know about the making-up. And that father of hers. He must have been a gentleman once, because they say he was at Cambridge—or was it Oxford? And now he's come down to portrait painting. Oh dear, society is so mixed these days! *All* my diamonds, Jane, Sir Percy said."

Marjie Jobling. "Hell and curses a ladder another pair of perfectly good silk stockings gone west Jane Jane oh she's gone I suppose Mother's grabbed her again I wonder if Summers will think I look nice it was sweet of him to take so much trouble with me special rehearsals without the others and all that it really looks like a crush Rita says so anyhow I wonder if George Marvin will manage to propose some time to-night I wish he could get it over and done with but he has such divine old-world ideas about the way a fair lady should be wooed that he never gets a move on by the way his ideas aren't quite the same as Summers' I wish I could control Summers the way I control George he's a bit too absolutely compelling for my taste sometimes I'm not sure that I like it yes I suppose I do I wonder if his eyelashes curl naturally Jane where the devil have you been?"

The Reverend Paul Welford. "Yes, my dear, I share your apprehensions regarding the nature of the entertainment. But, after all, one must march with the times. And Sir Percy *did* present the new organ. I wish you were going to chaperon Rita instead of my inadequate self; but, after all, influenza is influenza. Rita, my child, come here for a moment when you are dressed. Sir Percy is giving us all champagne for supper, I hear. Most generous: still, in my dissipated youth I was considered something of a judge of champagne. I think I shall ask Garrett for a small whisky-and-soda instead. Rita, my dear, is that all you are going to wear?"

Rita Welford. "Coming Daddy oh how thrilled I feel what *will* he say when he sees my skirt but after all look at what people wear bathing nowadays and I've got more on than that anyhow Major Arbuckle will like me like this it's a pity he's so old all right dear I'm coming no I'm quite warm *really*."

Mr. Cuthbert Summers. "Well, my boy, it's been handed to you on a plate, so far. You've fairly clicked with the fair Marjie—hook, line, and sinker. We'll sling the momentous question to-night, when she's had a glass of the old man's pop, and if the All Right goes up, as I think it will, we must decide what we are going to do next. Ask for His Nibs' blessing, or elope? Marjie *would* elope—she's a game kid. Failing her, there's that Podmore girl. As much dough, and more, but shorter on looks. Well, we must take the rough with the smooth. But one thing's certain, my address next week has got to be the Continent of Europe, with bride *or* without. Safety First. Where are those curling-tongs?"

Garrett. "I wonder where the Old Man *found* this stuff. Well, I suppose most of the company to-night will think it's Pommery or Bollinger—not that they have ever heard of either. Two glasses apiece—

that'll be ample, the Old Man said. It would be two too many for me. The old Armagnac for yours truly! James, you'll have to keep a sharp look-out in the hall to-night. If we aren't careful we shall have the house full of those gate-crashers, like they have in London—*and* worse. Take all the umbrellas out of the stand, and keep an eye on the candlesticks at supper. The forks and spoons don't matter: they are caterers' stuff. There's that blasted door-bell! These people *would* arrive an hour before the advertised time. Go and open it. I'll be along in a couple of ticks."

George Marvin. "Marjie—do you mind my calling you Marjie? There's something to-night that I really must say to you. Of course, I feel rather like a great big ogre trying to talk to a fairy—no, curse it, that won't do! The fairy part's all right; but I'm not an ogre, or anything like it. Well, what am I? How would an oak do? I'm a simple rough-hewn oak, trying to talk to an elm—an ash—no, damn it, what do oaks talk to? Let's start again. Marjie, I feel like a pilgrim coming upon a green oasis—cut out the green, old man: she's not *that!* I don't like the oasis either, but the pilgrim is good. Try again! I feel like a pilgrim—a thirsty pilgrim—approaching a—no, it sounds like a man going into a pub for a drink! She'll probably say so. She's so witty, so full of spirit—bless her! Marjie, I feel like a pilgrim approaching a shrine—a shrine which encloses a light—a light which has been burning steadily for me—for him—ever since the day we first met. That's grand. Now the light has grown stronger, and blinds him. What's that striking? Eight. Oh, my Lord!"

Hubert Clavering and Mary Clavering. It is always difficult to separate these two when they are conversing, because each has a habit of anticipating what the other is going to say, and answering out of turn. However, here is a rough approximation of the dialogue which is being bandied between Mary's bedroom and the studio outside, where Hubert Clavering is lying on the sofa.

'It's after eight, my daughter."

"All right, dear; I'm putting on my trousers now. How comfortable and baggy they are. Did you really run about in them when you were an art student in Paris?"

"Let me see you when you're dressed; I've got a bit of red silk drapery here that will make a sash for you. You'll not be as expensively adorned as the grand ladies of Broxborough; but you'll be *chic*—your own lovely self, in fact."

"Cut out the child-worship, Dad. It isn't done, these days."

"I wish I could come with you. I would lead you into the room, and say to the assembled fair: 'You smug, pork-fed, overdressed Daughters of Profiteerdom——'"

"There's no such word."

"'Don't interrupt!—'Take a look at my Mary—and then you can all go home and put yourselves to bed.'"

"Don't drivel, darling. And don't let's quarrel with our bread and butter. Two guineas is two guineas, isn't it? And possibly supper thrown in. Well, that's done at last. How do I look?"

"Those old velvet trousers of mine are in a wonderful state of preservation. You want to tie them in close to the ankles, though. Let me do it."

"Certainly not. You know it only brings on your cough if you bend down. I'll do it myself. There! Where's that bit of red stuff? Coo! It'll make a dinky sash. Now I'll put out your supper; then I'll sling my hook. Sardines—margarine—the end of the loaf. You must try and pretend it's caviare and oysters and nightingales' tongues, as usual. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to pretend. But I hate to think of all the good food that's going to be wasted on those people to-night, when you might be putting it away."

"It would probably give me indigestion, anyhow."

"No it wouldn't: it would build you up. That's what you want, and you're never going to be really strong till you get it. I'll blow in some of the two guineas to-morrow on——"

"Carry on with those things, Marvin," said Marjie, taking the hand of Summers. "About seven more."

"No, my child; there I must be firm. The rent! Landlords must live. I shall get another commission to paint a portrait soon—Sir Percy himself, perhaps—and then we'll have a gorgeous orgy. Meanwhile, sling your hook, or whatever it is you sling, or you'll be late. Remember you have sixteen Profiteers' daughters to beautify by nine o'clock."

"That'll be all right. I used to make myself up in two minutes in the old days; I often did half-a-dozen of the girls as well.

It's funny, stepping out with the old make-up box again. Well, I suppose I really must go. Don't forget your hot milk at bedtime. And don't go and burn it. Pretend it's champagne if you like, but turn the gas-ring off when you've finished. Good night!"

"Good night, my darling!"

George Marvin stood in the smoking-room of that substantial modern residence, The Old Hall, making himself useful to Marjie Jobling by blowing up indiarubber figures of animals, babies, and ladies in bathing-suits, to a degree just short of bursting point.

"Each girl carries one," explained Marjie, "in the final number. We prance round among the tables, and people pop them with their cigarettes. It's being done in London at all the night clubs. Blow hard, Marvin."

Marvin blew. A self-conscious Englishman seldom looks his best dressed as a pierrot and simulating apoplexy, but George blew. He felt dimly that he was doing a service for his Lady.

By profession George Marvin was a rising young chartered accountant, but by nature and instinct he was a troubadour—a sadly neglected calling in these days. All his life, under a stolid and hesitating exterior, he had been an incurable romanticist. From boyhood he had invested pretty girls with qualities which they did not possess. Marjie was the latest. She would have been surprised if she could have seen the golden image of herself which George had erected in his heart—a figure of regal beauty, surpassing wit, and warm, generous impulses. As a matter of fact she was a mercenary little chit, with an audacious tongue, eyes like saucers, and no scruples about using either. But troubadours have their own point of view about things.

There were three doors to the smoking-room. One led into the main hall, where the Curate of St. Bridget's was busy collecting tickets from the arriving guests; another into the billiard-room, which had been converted into a dressing-room for the young ladies of the chorus; and the third into the ball-room itself, where the orchestra were now tuning up. All these doors were closed, but a fever of activity was audible behind each.

George was oblivious to all this; his thoughts were turned inwards. He was wondering whether it would be worth while to have another shot to-night. Time pressed, with that slimy fellow Summers always about. Marjie certainly made a stimulating little figure, in her short white silk tunic and generous make-up. Yes, he would chance it. He must not startle her, of course, by an abrupt display of masculine masterfulness. He would lead up to the point gradually. He always did lead up to the point gradually; perhaps that was why he never got there.

So he began:—

"Will you have supper with me to-night?"

"No."

"I see. Are you going to dance with me?"

"I hope not," replied Miss Jobling, with sincerity.

"All right," said George, and blew up a pink lady wearing a removable blue bathing-suit.

"The first trouble with you, Marvin," explained Marjie, "is that you can't dance. Why don't you go and learn, instead of playing golf?"

"I don't play golf. Golf is an old man's game. I don't intend to take it up until I am forty."

"You're a methodical creature, Marvin."

"I believe in a man making the most of his life. When I was twenty-one I drafted out a list of all the things I meant to do in my time, and the age I would do them at, and so on."

"I see. Like a sort of railway time-table?"

"Exactly." How quick she was!

"And where in the time-table do you get married?"

This was a leading question, and quite unexpected. George flushed.

"Well, that of course rather depends on—er—somebody else. But fairly soon, I hope."

Marjie turned and surveyed him thoughtfully.

"Exactly how far have you thought this time-table out?" she asked. "Where are you going to live, for instance, after you're married—supposing you can find anybody who'll risk it?"

"I thought of moving to London, and settling in a good healthy suburb."

"A villa in Golder's Green, or something?"

"Something quite modest to start with, naturally. But it would be an enchanted palace, with the right person! And, of course, Hampstead Heath would be a splendid romping ground for the——" he hesitated.

"I see. You've thought that out, too? How many of them were you contemplating?"

"I should like three—two boys and a girl. I should prefer one of the boys to be left-handed: there hasn't been a really good left-handed amateur bowler in England for twenty years. But, of course, one can't be sure that he would be left-handed."

"No," said Marjie, gravely. "You would have to put a footnote about that, under the time-table. And have you settled how you are going to spend your Old Age Pension?"

George looked at her, but her expression merely registered admiring interest.

"I don't think I shall be eligible for an Old Age Pension," he replied. "I expect to come into some money later on—a good deal of money. But I wasn't going to speak about that."

"For Heaven's sake! Why not?"

"Because what I am saying concerns you, in a way——"

"It's coming!" said Marjie to herself. "I wonder how much he's got. If only the fool would *say!*"

"——and I simply can't talk about money and—you—in the same breath. It would spoil everything. Er—Miss Jobling——"

"Oh, for God's sake call me Marjie!"

"Marjie. Oh, thank you! Er—Marjie——"

AT this moment the door from the ballroom opened, to admit the immaculate person of Mr. Cuthbert Summers, the well-known West-end Producer. No entrance could have been less welcome to George at that moment, but it probably saved him from a life of misery.

Mr. Summers advanced with both hands outstretched.

"Aye say, darling, how sweet you look!" he exclaimed.

Marjie had already explained to George that in the theatrical profession everyone is addressed as "darling;" but for all that he felt resentful. He had never met an actor in his life, but something told him—and told him correctly—that all actors were not like this greasy bounder.

"Do I, darling?" replied Marjie.

"Aye'll tell the League of Nations you do," responded Mr. Summers, humorously.

"Bless you! What a lovely line! Is everything all ready in the ballroom?"

"Quaite. What about the gairls?"

"They're in there," said Marjie, indicating the billiard-room. "The make-up woman is getting busy on them. She'll have her work cut out fixing Jane Podmore's face. I say, darling, don't you think we might go somewhere and try out our number—our own, own number—just once more? I want it to be absolutely perfect." (Since Marjie had made Mr. Summers's acquaintance, a song was a number, a play a show, and a humorous rejoinder a line.)

This suggestion fitted Mr. Summers's plans perfectly. In fact, he had been on the point of making it himself.

"Whay not?" he said, readily. "Where can we go?"

"Let's think. The ballroom is full of people by this time. I know—the schoolroom! There's an old piano there. Come on, darling!"

Summers turned to George, smiling.

"Sorry to depraive you, old boy!" he said.

"Carry on with those things, Marvin," added Marjie. "About seven more."

She took the compliant Summers's hand, and the pair ran to the door leading into the hall. Here they collided heavily with an entering group, composed of Marjie's parents, the Vicar, and his daughter Rita.

"All right, Bombo!" said Marjie, to her spluttering progenitor. "No bones broken! Evening, Mr. Welford. How do you like me? Some costume, eh?"

"Some is the precise word," replied the Vicar, placidly.

"Mr. Summers and I are going to run through our number," continued Marjie, "in the schoolroom."

"No you aren't!" boomed Sir Percy, who had now recovered his breath. "It's ten minutes after time already. Get a move on, Summers, and start your Cabaret, or whatever it is."

"Certainly, Sir Percy," replied Summers, whose first rule in life was deference to the hand which paid him. He crossed to the billiard-room door and knocked.

"Are you dressed and ready, ladies?"

Shrill cries of assent answered him, and the Beauty Chorus of the Broxborough Follies debouched into the room.

"Ready," amended the Vicar to himself, "but not dressed."

Summers opened the double doors leading into the ballroom, and nodded to the leader of the orchestra.

"Lane up, please," he said to the girls, "and march in. Remember to step off with the raight foot. Opening chorus, then dance; then Miss Podmore and Miss Welford in duet. One, two, three—off!"

The band in the ballroom broke into cacophonous melody, the Beauty Chorus stepped out, and the doors were closed again.

Summers turned quickly to Marjie.

"Now!" he said, softly—"that schoolroom! We've got nearly twenty minutes."

Marjie turned doubtfully towards the group by the fireplace.

"What about the male parent? There'll be a hell of a row if he sees us."

'You go first: aye'll follow directly. I *must* see you for a minute, darling!" Mr. Summers flashed a lightning glance from under his curly eyelashes.

"All right," said Marjie, a little dizzily, and slipped from the room.

"A LIQUEUR, Mr. Welford," suggested Sir Percy, "before we face the music?"

"No, thank you, Sir Percy."

"Summers?"

"Just a tiny spot of anything you are having, Sir Percy."

Sir Percy turned to one of the most conspicuous ornaments of the smoking-room—the figure of a knight in armour, half concealed by the curtains of the deep bay window. Like everything else in The Old Hall, it was new—of such modern design, in fact, that when its owner pressed a hidden spring, the front of the knight's body-armour swung open, revealing a cavity fitted with liqueur bottles and glasses.

"*Crême de menthe*—Kümmel—give it a name," said Sir Percy, genially.

The name given by Summers was Kümmel, and he and Sir Percy were drinking success to the entertainment when the door opened and the Curate of St. Bridget's entered, carrying something rather bulky in a canvas bag. He was a muscular young Christian, with a wide smile.

"What's all this?" inquired Sir Percy.

'Our Treasurer," explained the Vicar. 'I fancy these are the proceeds."

"Oh, the doings! How much?"

'About a hundred pounds, sir," said the Curate. "Some of it was taken at the door to-night, but most of it has been in my possession for two or three weeks. A bit of a responsibility, I can tell you, when you live in lodgings and don't even own a cashbox! May I put it in this safe? Then I shall be able to sleep soundly to-night." He indicated a small safe let into the wall beside the fireplace.

"As it happens, I left the key of that safe at the office," said Sir Percy.

"Shall I ring for Garrett, dear?" suggested Lady Jobling, "and tell him to put the money into the plate chest?"

"Garrett's got his work cut out watching those caterer's men. We'll pop it under a cushion, or something: it'll be safe enough. After all, we're all friends here—hey?" added Sir Percy, generously. He looked round the room. "I know—we'll put it into old Tin Tummy here. Nobody would think of searching him, even if they knew where the spring was. Hand it over."

He thrust the bag, which was stuffed chiefly with pound notes and silver, right in among the liqueur glasses, and snapped the knight's front door.

"Now, everybody," he continued, "it's time the Official Party showed itself. Let's go in and pretend we like it. Lead the way, Summers. Oh, he seems to have gone already! Never mind; I know where our seats are—the centre ringside table at the foot of the room. Will you join us, Mr. Marvin?"

"I've got to finish blowing these things up first, Sir Percy."

"All right: slip in when you're finished. I'll just lock this door leading into the hall, to be on the safe side with the money. Lead the way, Martha. It's a pity about the Honourable Portmore, but never mind. You'll sit on my left, Mr. Welford."

George inflated the last indiarubber monstrosity and lighted a cigarette. Outside in the ballroom he could hear the ripple of music and the rhythmic shuffle of feet, as Marjie and the sinuous Mr. Summers "put over a number." He had no intention of going into the ballroom. He would wait here, on the offchance of a second innings with Marjie during the interval, which he knew would occur in about twenty minutes' time. Meanwhile, an armchair——

The door leading into the billiard-room opened, and a girl appeared. She gave a startled exclamation.

"I didn't know there was anybody here," she said.

"I didn't know there was anybody there!" replied George, smiling and indicating the billiard-room.

"I was there to make the girls up. I'm a professional."

Another professional! But this professional seemed to have nothing in common

with Mr. Summers. Refinement and breeding showed themselves in the perfect lines of her face, her slender limbs, and her easy movements. At the same time there was a certain Cockney independence in the lift of her chin and the impertinence of her nose. She was dressed as a Paris art student, of the accepted pattern, in baggy velvet trousers, tied in at the ankles, a pale blue silk shirt, and a red sash. She wore a velvet tam-o'-shanter crammed over her fair hair, well pulled down on one side.

George Marvin's chest gave a gentle heave, and Marjie's golden image rocked slightly upon its pedestal of clay.

"I see you're in costume yourself," he said. "Are you going to do a—turn?"

"Well, in a way. During the interval they're going to have a sort of amateur *palais de danse*—like the sort of thing these people think they have in London. We girls stand in a pen, with numbers on, and anybody can dance with us for five minutes for a shilling—all for the benefit of the Cottage Hospital. I'll show the lads of this village how far they can go with me for a shilling! What are you doing here?"

George explained, and gave his name. Mary Clavering gave hers in exchange; and without quite knowing how, George presently found himself sharing a sofa with this attractive little *gamine*, chatting away with more ease than he had ever experienced in a woman's presence before.

"My father's an artist," said Mary, after George had given her an able outline of the main principles of accountancy, followed by a short but luminous address on average adjusting—"a portrait painter. We only came here three months ago. We used to live in London, but his lungs wouldn't stand it. Fogs. It was a pity in a way, because I had to give up my work; so I couldn't help him any more."

"You were on the stage?"

"Yes. Mother was there before me. When she died I had to look after Father; and with his health the way it is, he's a whole-time job Am I boring you?"

"Oh, no! I feel very much honoured that you should talk to me about yourself. I say"—inspirations were crowding upon George now—"are you going into supper with anybody to-night?"

"I'm quite sure I'm not. I'll be lucky if I get a slice of cold ham in the servants' hall."

"That would be an insult," said George, firmly. "You shall have some supper with me—that is, if you will," he added.

"Don't you worry; I will. But where are we going to get it?"

"We'll ask Garrett." George leaned over and pressed a bell-push

"That butler?"

"Yes: he's a friend of mine."

"I'm not so sure that he's a friend of mine. I had a row with him at the front door to-night, and I told him something about his features which *may* have put the lid on my supper."

"What was the row about?"

"He had the nerve to tell me to go round to the side-door!"

"I'll tick him off for that," said George. "Meanwhile, what would you like for supper, assuming that we can get it?"

"Oh, anything does for me. I wish my dad was here, though. He would appreciate good food. He doesn't see too much of it these days, and he needs all the feeding up he can get—rich soup, and chicken, and champagne, and things like that—things they'd simply throw at you in a house like this. Well, it's no use crying for the moon."

Mary gave a philosophic little sigh, followed by a slight wriggle, as if to dislodge Black Care from her slim shoulders, and turned abruptly to George.

"Are you good at pretending," she asked—"at make-believe?"

"I don't quite follow.'

"Well, when you haven't got a thing, can you pretend that you *have* got it? It's a great help, sometimes. I've got a gift that way; so has Dad. Perhaps I get it from him."

George reflected, then smiled.

"Yes, I suppose I do pretend a good deal—about some things," he replied. (It had just occurred to him that his estimate of Marjie Jobling was largely make-believe.) "What sort of things do you pretend about?"

"Food, to start with. When we have an egg, it's often a chicken—see?"

" You ought to go somewhere else for them," said George, after considering the matter.

Miss Clavering gave a little sigh.

" What I mean," she exclaimed, patiently, ' is that we *pretend* we're eating a chicken—a real, full-sized, roast chicken."

" Oh, I see. Does it taste like one ? "

" Of course it does—if you pretend hard enough. Now tell me some of the things that you pretend about."

" I can't pretend on purpose, like you do. I think most of my pretends are unconscious."

' What do you mean by that exactly ? "

As George was quite incapable of explaining what he meant by that exactly, it was perhaps fortunate that their discussion was now interrupted by a loud burst of applause from the ballroom.

" That's the end of the first half," said

"How dare you talk to me like that?" said Mary. "You—you goggle-eyed little profiteer! How dare you?"

Mary, running to the door and peeping through. "You'd better get out of here."

"But what about your supper? I must get you some before you go."

"I haven't noticed old Frosty-Face answering that bell."

"I expect he's too busy downstairs to-night. Look here"—George produced a ticket from his waistcoat pocket—"this is my ticket of admission. It's good for one supper: it says so. I'm going home: you take it!"

"And get thrown out of the supper-room? No fear!"

"Then listen!" said George, suddenly

resolute and masterful. "I am entitled to one supper in this house, and I'm not going to be done out of my rights. You will come along downstairs with me, and we will collect a trayful of something, even if we have to invade Garrett's pantry to get it! Will you?"

Mary gave him a seraphic smile.

"Will I? Come on!" she said.

George unlocked the door, and they tiptoed into the hall. George, who had never done this sort of thing before, was enjoying himself hugely.

"What would you like?" he whispered.

"Chicken—real chicken!"

"You shall have it. *And* champagne?"

"And champagne!"

Together they crept through a green baize doorway, which George knew led to the back premises. They were hand in hand now. Certainly George was going it.

"THAT'S rum," said Sir Percy. "*Very* rum," he repeated, and turned with lowering brow to face the assembled company, which consisted of the Official Party and the Committee of the Cottage Hospital, retrieved from the ballroom at the end of the evening for a night-cap in the smoking-room. "In fact," he continued, "a dashed awkward thing has happened."

"The money?" said the Vicar, quickly.

"Yes. You remember I shoved it in here. Well, it's gone! Is that door into the hall still locked?"

The Vicar tried the handle.

"Yes," he said.

"Then it can't have gone out that way. It must have been somebody on the inside. Who was with us at the time?"

"Your own family, myself, and my daughter, Mr. Summers, and George Marvin."

"Where are Summers and Marvin?"

"Mr. Summers is in the ballroom, dear," replied Lady Jobling, "settling with the band. He'll be here in a moment."

"Where's Marvin?"

"Gone home, I believe," said the Vicar. "He told me he was leaving early."

"Well, somebody had better telephone for him. We shall want his evidence."

"Evidence?" said several voices.

"Yes. I'm going to hold an immediate inquiry about this—quite informal, of course. We'll avoid gossip that way. After all, I'm a County Magistrate; I'm within my rights. Sit down, Martha. Sit down, Mr. Welford. Sit down, gentlemen. Call those girls in, somebody."

The Vicar tapped on the billiard-room door, and was answered by Marjie and Rita, still in costume.

"Your father would like to speak to you, my dear," said the Vicar.

"What's the matter, Bombo?" inquired Marjie, that human gadfly, of her parent, who by this time had established himself judicially behind a large knee-hole table. "What's that face for?"

"Chair!" boomed Alderman Berridge, grocer and Italian warehouseman, and a prominent member of the Finance Committee of the Hospital.

Marjie and Rita turned to each other and giggled.

"Hush, Marjie dear!" said Lady Jobling "Your father is sitting as a magistrate."

"Oh! I thought it was his indigestion again."

"Who is in that room?" inquired Sir Percy, majestically, pointing towards the billiard-room door.

"Fourteen girls with nothing on. Do you want to see them?"

"Yes—no!" A complete eruption on Sir Percy's part was averted by the entrance of George Marvin, who had been intercepted upon the very eve of departure.

The situation was briefly explained to him, and Sir Percy asked:—

"Is there anybody else to be accounted for?"

"No," said Marjie. "Yes, there is," she said, suddenly, "Miss Clavering."

"Who is Miss Clavering?"

"The girl who came to make us up. She used to be a professional."

"She's the one!" said Alderman Berridge, the leading creditor of the Clavering household. "She's pinched the money, and now she's done a guy."

"No, she hasn't!" said a fierce voice. Everybody turned towards George Marvin, who suddenly realized that he was the person who had spoken.

'How do you know she hasn't?" asked Berridge.

"Because I was with her——"

"Chair, chair!" interrupted Sir Percy, fussily. "Please address yourself to me, Mr. Marvin You say you were with th s young person, in this room?"

"Yes. I met her in here while you were all in the ballroom. We had a—chat—and I got her some supper from downstairs."

"Where is she now?"

Sir Percy was answered by a sudden crash from behind the heavy curtains which covered the bay window.

"What's that?" cried everybody.

The curtains parted, and Mary Clavering appeared—pale, tight-lipped, and defiant. Observant eyes noted that she was refastening her scarlet sash.

"Are you Miss Clavering?" asked Sir Percy.

"Yes."

"What were you doing in that bay window, behind those curtains?"

"I was having my supper."

"What was the noise we heard?"

"I'd kicked over my supper tray."

"Why?"

"Because I'd finished my supper, of course! May I ask why you are putting all these questions to me?"

"Some money is missing out of this room——"

"Some what?" Mary was three paces nearer to the judgment seat in a flash.

"Some money is missing out of that affair over there, and you are the only person——"

Mary strode right up to the desk.

"How dare you talk to me like that?" she said. "You—you goggled-eyed little profiteer! How dare you?"

There was a tense pause. For the moment Mary was undoubtedly on top of the situation. Then the grating voice of Alderman Berridge broke in.

"That's guilt, that is! She pinched it, all right."

In a flash Mary had whirled round on him; but the burly form of the Vicar stood in her way.

"Miss Clavering," he said, gently, "Sir Percy is asking for your co-operation. The money taken for the entertainment to-night has disappeared from this room, and all we are suggesting is that you may be able to tell us whether you have seen any suspicious-looking characters about. You understand?"

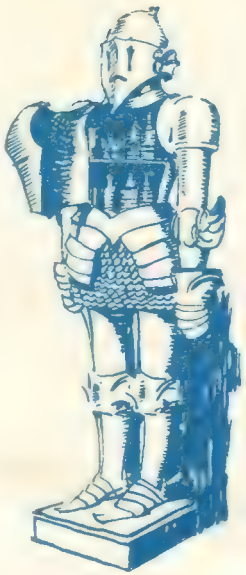
Mary relaxed a little.

"I was in that billiard-room most of the evening," she said. "Then I came in here, and found Mr. Marvin. We had a talk, and he got me some supper. Then he left. By the time I got back here with my tray the *Palais de Danse* stuff was nearly over, so I locked that door again, as I had found it, and went behind those curtains to have my supper in peace. I don't know why I'm telling you all this."

"Why didn't you eat your supper in the billiard-room, instead of loitering here?" demanded Sir Percy, seizing on a point.

Mary turned to him.

"Have you ever tried to eat with a parcel of half-dressed girls round you, dropping face powder all over your tray?" she asked.



"No, he has not," retorted Lady Jobling, with unusual readiness.

Mary looked round the room.

"Any more remarks to offer, anybody?"

"Yes," said Berridge. "You were fastening up that sash of yours when you came through those curtains. Why?"

"For the same reason that you ought to be pulling down your tie from above the back of your collar—because it was out of place!"

"That's an important clue," said Sir Percy, referring apparently to the sash. "Had you been concealing anything about your person?"

Mary stepped back quickly. To George Marvin's anxious eyes she seemed to have gone a shade paler.

"No," she said, "I had not."

"I suppose you wouldn't object to being searched?"

"I most certainly should."

"She's guilty," said Alderman Berridge. "She's confessed. Search her!"

"Come and try!" blazed Mary.

Once more the Vicar interposed.

"May I say a word, Miss Clavering—for your own protection? The missing property is quite bulky. If you would permit Lady Jobling to pass her hands quite lightly over your person, she could not fail to detect its presence. If you would submit to this purely formal proceeding, we could then offer you a most handsome apology——"

"Nobody is going to lay a finger on me," said Mary, doggedly.

"As a mere matter of form? The investigation could take place in another room——"

"You needn't worry. There isn't going to be any investigation."

Meanwhile strange things were happening inside George Marvin. A chartered accountant had been swept overboard; a troubadour was at the helm. She *must* be saved! Innocent or guilty, this plucky, solitary little figure, with its back to the wall, must be saved! But how?

Marjie was speaking now.

"Why shouldn't we all be searched? You can start on me, with pleasure. Search the whole chorus while you're about it. It won't take long."

"An admirable suggestion," said the Vicar. He turned to Mary. "That'll make

things quite easy for you, Miss Clavering."

But Mary stood fast.

"I know why you're offering to be searched first," she said to Marjie. "You aren't really trying to make things easy for me, you're trying to work things so that in the end I shall have to take my turn with the others; because you all believe that I've *got* the money—all except Mr. Marvin, that is. He believes in me."

Next moment George was standing by her side. How he got there he never quite knew.

"She's perfectly right," he said. "I know she hasn't taken the money."

"How do you know?" asked several voices.

"Because I took it myself!"

It was a dramatic moment; in fact, it marked, or ought to have marked, the peak of George's career as a troubadour. Unfortunately, it was completely ruined by a most unromantic diversion. In fact, no one in the room heard his confession at all—except the girl at his side.

The diversion consisted of Inspector Collins of the Broxborough Police who, appearing through the double doors which led from the ballroom, stood mountainously upon the threshold, saluting Sir Percy. Behind him, in the now darkened ballroom, a wilting figure in immaculate evening dress was faintly visible, affectionately linked to a policeman.

"I'm sorry to break in on the festivities, Sir Percy, *and* ladies and gentlemen," said the Inspector, "but it is my duty to report to you that I have been compelled to make an arrest on your premises. There has been a warrant out against the man for some months, but we only got evidence of identity this afternoon. He's a slippery customer——"

"Who is the man?" asked Sir Percy.

"His real name, sir, is believed to be Samuel Winter."

"Sam Winter?" said a voice, sharply. It was Mary's.

"Yes—here under the alias of Cuthbert Summers."

"*Summers?*" Everybody spoke this time.

"Yes. Posing as an actor from London."

"What is the charge against him?" asked Sir Percy.

"Bigamy, Sir Percy."

"MAY I drive you home, Miss Clavering?" asked George, half an hour later.

"Thank you," said Mary, almost meekly; "you may."

Like the rest of the party, she was a prey to reaction, for a good many things had happened during that half hour. In the first place, Mr. Samuel Winter, alias Cuthbert Summers, having wisely decided not to complicate the charges already hanging over him, had voluntarily disgorged the canvas bag and its contents. (He had slipped into the smoking-room just as George and Mary had left it in search of supper, and effected his purpose before they came back.)

He explained in extenuation, rather mysteriously, that he needed the money urgently for a journey. Of the journey itself he gave no details; but Marjie Jobling—a white, shaking, and slightly hysterical Marjie Jobling—went to bed with a headache directly after his departure with his escort. Secondly, Mary had received the handsome apology which the Vicar had promised her, delivered by Sir Percy Jobling in person, and reinforced by a double fee for professional services.

Thirdly, fourthly, and fifthly—well, it was all too exciting to be sorted out at once. Mary leaned back contentedly in the car, with her trousered legs extended beneath the long scuttle, gazing out on the moonlit road. George Marvin's attention was fully occupied in maintaining a speed of about eight miles an hour without openly changing down to his second gear.

Presently Mary began to talk.

"Fancy running across Sam Winter again," she said.

"You knew him?"

"Yes, I knew him all right. He was a chorus boy at the Regality in the old days. Sacked for stealing money out of the girls' dressing-room when they were all on for a number. That's the sort of gentleman he was."

"And is, apparently."

"Yes. I could have warned them about him a fortnight ago, if I'd known. How he got into that house at all beats me. Forged testimonials, I suppose." Then she continued, reflectively:—

"Somebody had a narrow escape to-night. Did you see her face when the Inspector put over that line about bigamy?"

"You mean Marjie Jobling?"

"Yes. Something tells me that she knew all about the journey that Sam was going to take with that money. (Not about the money, of course, but the journey.) And she knew jolly well who was going with him. Sir Percy won't press this charge if she can help it, you can bet your boots. There might be some front-page stuff for the Sunday papers. She's had a lesson all right."

"So has somebody else." It was George who said this, but he said it to himself.

Mary looked up at him. "There'll be no need to pretend," she said.

After which he turned and gazed affectionately down upon the dim figure by his side.

The car immediately ran into a hedge, and the faltering engine ceased to function.

"Don't start it up for a minute," said Miss Clavering. "I've got to speak to you about something. I've got to thank you, too. I've got to talk to you like a mother as well, though."

"All right," said George, contentedly. "Which are you going to do first?"

"I'm going to give you a good telling off. Why did you come out with that thundering lie about having stolen the money yourself?"

George considered.

"That," he replied at length, "was just make-believe."

"I should think it was. What did you *do* it for?" Mary knew perfectly well what George had done it for, but being a woman she wanted him to tell her.

George slipped his arm into hers.

"To cut a long story short——" he began——

"But I don't want you to cut it short," said Mary. "Start your old engine and take me home, and you and I and Dad will have supper together, and after that you can do the whole act, without cuts!"

George obeyed, and presently the highly accelerated car arrived outside the studio. Mary got out and made her way in the darkness up the little gravel path that led to the door. George, following, noticed for the first time that she was walking rather heavily. Tired out, no doubt.

Mary let herself in with a latchkey—and George noted with an odd thrill that she was left-handed.

Presently they were standing in the little hall together.

"What are we going to have for supper?" asked George, playing up. "Ortolans and Imperial Tokay?"

"We are going to have chicken and champagne," announced Mary.

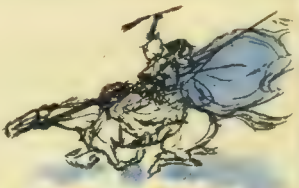
"That'll be great," said George. "I'll pretend like anything!" he added, awkwardly.

Mary looked up at him.

"There'll be no need to pretend," she said; "it's going to be the real thing this time."

"The real thing?"

"Yes. I've got half a cold chicken down the right leg of my trousers and a bottle of champagne down the left! That was why I wouldn't let them search me. Come and wake Dad!"



Diana's Christmas Diary

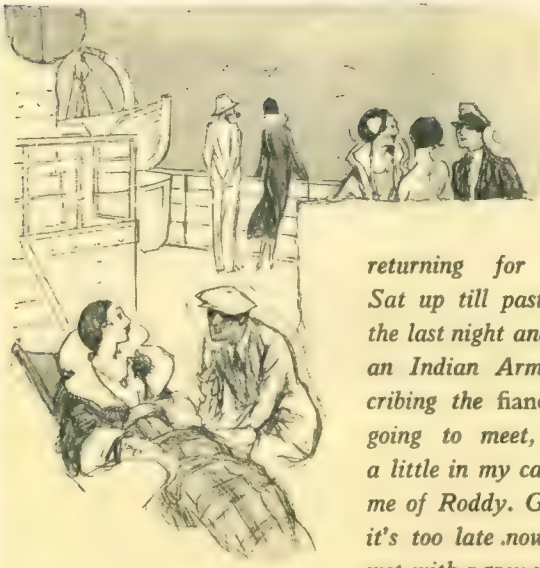
By

F. E. Baily

December 1st

BACK home again in Mount Street after a marvellous time in North Africa where Mummy took me to try and forget about breaking off my engagement with Roddy Lanyon, and that I'm still Diana Crossley instead of becoming Diana Lanyon. I'm full of memories of Arabs in burnous—or is it burnouses?—and camels, and sunshine and marvellous motoring roads, and the desert, and delightful French officers, and Spahis, and the Foreign Legion at Sidi-bel-Abbès. Roddy, being a Guardsman, would have despised the Foreign Legion sentries outside Headquarters. We came home from Marseilles in a liner full of exiles from the east

Pictured by A. K. Macdonald



returning for Christmas. Sat up till past 3 a.m. on the last night and listened to an Indian Army boy describing the fiancée *he was going to meet, and cried a little in my cabin afterwards because it reminded me of Roddy. God knows why we quarrelled, but it's too late now. Next morning it was cold and wet, with a grey sea, and I simply loathe the business of landing, and the good-byes, and the customs officers and everything.*

DEC. 2nd.—Went to bed early in order to wallow in the sorrows of the past. After I'd undressed I got out Roddy's photographs, the one in uniform and the ones I took of him myself, and read some of his letters. He couldn't write letters to save his life, but they were rather sweet. I realise he's a cold, heartless brute, and I could never stand being bossed up by Roddy or anyone else, but I did love him once, and somehow one misses it all.

DEC. 5th.—Went to Victoria in the car to see Aunt Iris off to Paris. Coming back we were held up because the Old Guard was just leaving the Palace. It was a warm, sunny day and they weren't wearing great coats and I recognised them by their buttons for the Bombardiers, Roddy's regiment. The crowd and the mounted police and the band all got into my throat and then the Old Guard swung out of the Palace gate and wheeled to the right, and there was Roddy, before my very eyes, carrying the Colour. Of course,

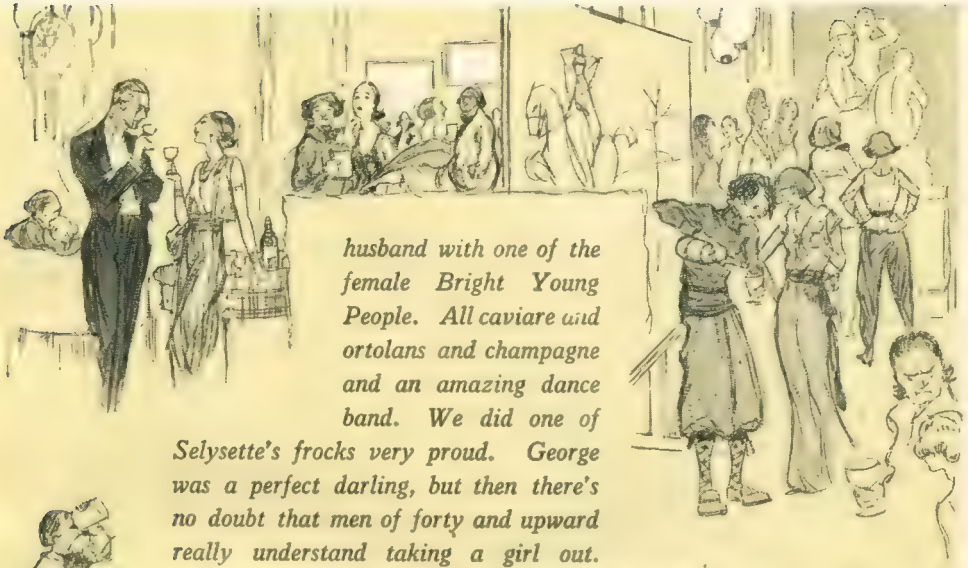
he never saw me in the car. He looked very straight and bored and frightfully good-looking, and I felt the colour go out of my cheeks behind my make-up, and then come back again.

DEC. 10th.—Went to Meriel's bottle party in her Chelsea studio. Meriel is young, rich, and independent and pretends to paint as an excuse for living in a studio. One wears what one pleases. I wore pyjamas because these affairs

tend to become fast and furious and a frock gets torn to rags. There were the usual mob—artists, poets, writers, actresses, young men working on a half-commission basis, and one or two human beings. I got off with one of the human beings, Sir George Frack, who's forty-four and a very eligible bachelor who means to remain one. Perfectly charming, and perfectly unscrupulous, I should say; he's also been a diplomat, traveller, soldier, and heaven knows what. Got maudlin and discussed my broken heart with him. He said life always provided consolation and asked me to dine with him at the Reine d'Or. I accepted, though I daresay Mummy would disapprove.

DEC. 15th.—Went to buy frocks at Selysette's because I don't seem to have a rag to my back, and after all, Christmas is Christmas. She paraded all her loveliest mannequins, and the frocks were adorable. I wonder what sort of men will dance with me and kiss me in my new frocks? I can't say I care very much.

DEC. 17th.—Dined with George Frack at the Reine d'Or, which is the last word in sophistication, where one sees everyone with everyone else's husband and everyone's



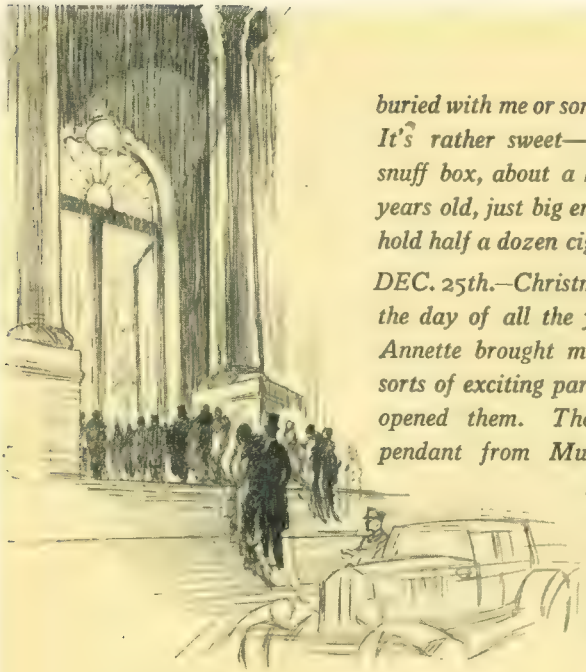
husband with one of the female Bright Young People. All caviare and ortolans and champagne and an amazing dance band. We did one of Selysette's frocks very proud. George was a perfect darling, but then there's no doubt that men of forty and upward really understand taking a girl out. They're discriminating and unselfish and can afford it. Also they're grateful for small mercies.

George asked me just what I'd like to eat and then, as we both knew he knew much better than I did how to order a dinner, kindly ordered it for me. He wouldn't let me drink cocktails, but let me have one glass of sherry. He talked sympathetically and tactfully, which means he let me talk and then amused me when I was tired of talking. He danced beautifully and didn't hug me or rush me about the floor. Later on we discussed my broken heart again and he was frightfully nice. He said he was sorry I'd had a sad experience at my age, because twenty-one was too soon for a girl to be unhappy, but that any experience was better than stagnation. He didn't try to kiss me going home in the car. I'm never quite sure whether that's

K. Macdonald

a compliment or not, but I think he knew I didn't want him to, and yet he managed to let me understand that he found the temptation terribly severe.

DEC. 20th.—Went out buying my last Christmas presents. The usual marvellous show in the shops and devoted men acquiring the most expensive silk stockings. I did a mad thing; I bought last of all a present for Roddy. Of course, I'll never be able to give it him so I'll keep it as a memento and have it



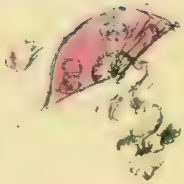
buried with me or something. It's rather sweet—a silver snuff box, about a hundred years old, just big enough to hold half a dozen cigarettes.

DEC. 25th.—Christmas day, the day of all the ye-year. Annette brought me in all sorts of exciting parcels, and I sat up in bed and opened them. There were a simply divine pendant from Mummy and a cheque from Daddy, and dozens of other things and nothing from Roddy, not even a card. So that was that, and the end of that hunting.

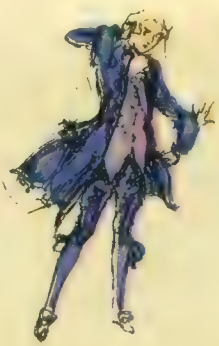
I went to Church as one does somehow on Christmas Day, and felt slightly gulpy as one equally does, and night brought the Shaw Vanes' fancy dress dance. I went as a Pierrette ; it's old stuff but if you have nice legs what better can you do? George Frack was there, in eighteenth century kit that suited him to a hair and inevitably we drifted to one another, and we danced. And as we came to anchor after the first dance, whom should I see but Roddy escorting a most amazing girl with auburn hair got up as Nell Gwynne, who was also auburn. He bowed in the manner of one delivering

a knife thrust, and I smiled an icy smile. He wore the Peninsular War period kit of the Bombardiers and looked too handsome for words. He passed on with his red-haired witch and I dragged myself back to George. After all, I still had George.

The night wore on with wine, women, and song and we reached the point when the band played the Blue Danube, which always releases the inhibitions of the middle-aged. Immediately afterwards George Frack led me aside into a deserted corridor and kissed me, and I don't know why but I suddenly felt physically sick and boxed his ears. Victorian, no doubt, but satisfying. So he went away and I stood by



myself with tears in my eyes of half rage and half loneliness and then Roddy came wandering along the corridor, looking like a firing party at dawn, and I don't know how it happened but I found myself in his arms. And I said what about the red-haired girl? and he said oh hell, who cared about her? and he said what about George Frack?



and I said oh hell, who cared about him? And I fished my silver box out of my vanity bag and gave it to him and he kissed it, and then out of a cartouche box or something he produced a lovely old paste necklace and put it round my neck, and it seemed we'd both bought each other a Christmas present and never knew it, and we both wanted to be engaged again only we were too proud to say so. And I danced every other dance with Roddy and went home with his ring on my finger once more, so happy I could have screamed.

JAN. 1st.—*To-day Roddy motored me down into the country to see Lanyon Manor, his family place, that I'd never seen before, which will be ours when we're married. It's all history under one roof, with wonderful panellings and windows and furniture and pictures. I stood with my hand in his at the foot of the great staircase and saw in imagination all the Lanyon women, in Victorian dresses, and powder and patches, and ruffs and stomachers, and Tudor gowns and headdresses, stepping proudly down, and I knew I belonged, and it felt very solemn till Roddy kissed me.*

Back in my own bedroom I'm just dreaming a little of my wedding, and the wedding party from the Regiment, and the

Guards' chapel, and the glory of belonging to Roddy and the Regiment and all that long line of Lanyon women; and I know, as only a girl knows, it will be such a wonderful New Year.

THE WONDERFUL VOYAGE

SITUATED between the Carolines and Marshalls, Kingsway is now a Japanese mandated island.

I don't know what the Japs have done with it, but in those days, before the War, it was a pleasant enough place, sizable, with two large villages, Opu and Tarari, on the western seaboard, and two trade stations.

Brand was the trader at Tarari and Kent at Opu.

There was a lovely sea road between the two stations and Kent often took it, not for the sake of exercise or the desire for change, but chiefly because Brand had a lovely daughter.

At least a very good-looking daughter, for Kate Brand's type of beauty was perhaps a bit too much on the practical side strictly to merit the word "lovely."

At any rate, she was in her dark, decided way, lovely enough for Kent. They said she had Spanish blood in her, which accounted for the darkness of her eyes and decision of her manner. And possibly she had; it didn't matter. The fact remained she was naturally and inevitably fatal to Kent, who was a medium-sized, mouse-coloured man, undecided in manner and with the honest and liquid eyes of an animal.

Kate Brand had accepted him as a lover, perhaps because he was the only possible thing of that sort on Kingsway, perhaps because she saw behind the veil of his diffidence a worth-while man; the result was the same, for not only had she accepted him as a lover, but she had promised to marry him. Brand had consented; there was no reason for delay—or only one, the want of a parson.

But he was coming. The missionary schooner was due in, and Adams, the missionary, would do the splicing.

II.

Walking together on the beach of Tarari this evening, the happy lovers had taken their seats for a moment on the bole of a blown-down palm to admire the view and drink the beauty of the sunset.

The shouting of kanaka children at play with an old kerosene drum came mixed with the sound of the surf on the reef, and the silky, uncertain whisper of the wind stirring the salt-white sands of the beach.

"Lovely, isn't it?" said Kent.

"Yes," said the girl, but without enthusiasm; "if it wasn't always the same. But I suppose there is no use in grumbling."

By H. de Vere STACPOOLE

Illustrated by EDWARD OSMOND

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"Lovely, isn't it?" said Kent.
"Yes," said the girl, but without enthusiasm; "if it wasn't always the same."

"Of course," he said, "if you get tired of the place, we can move somewhere else; there are lots of stations where you would have more society and change; only, of course, you have your father here, and that means a lot, doesn't it?"

"I'm not grumbling," said she. He believed her.

Suddenly he rose and shaded his eyes. A white fleck showed beyond the cape to the north. It was the fore-canvas of a vessel opening the western beach—the schooner—no, it was a brig. The girl had risen with him.

"Only a frowsty old brig," said she. "Wonder what she wants. She's not for us, for dad has got all his copra away last week. Is she for you?"

"No," said Kent, "she has nothing to do with me. I expect she's calling for water. If she is, she'll drop her anchor at Opu."

Ships, unless specially calling at Tarari, always choose the waters off Opu for

anchorage—that is, in fine weather—for there the reefs are much easier to negotiate.

They watched the old brig for a few minutes as she stood down the coast, the sunset blaze enveloping her and the golden gulls flighting around her. Then Kent, saying good night to the girl in the language of Love, started off back home. The stars were out before he got to his house: a large, roomy, lime-washed bungalow, pleasantly situated on the edge of the groves, facing the sea. He could see the amber riding light of the brig that had come in and was lying a few cable lengths off the beach, and as he came up to his veranda he received the surprise of his life in the tall, white drill-clad figure of Adams, the missionary.

"You!" said Kent, joyously. 'Why, where in the blazes have you popped in from? Where's the *Araya*? You haven't come in that old brig, have you?"

"Sure," said Adams. "The *Araya* stove herself coming into Napa harbour, so I took passage on that old hooker. She's the *Sea Horse*—Captain Stringer—bound for Ponape, but I bargained with him to alter his course a few points and shove me ashore here. Say, I've taken the liberty of bringing a friend up to your house; passenger—the jolliest chap in the world. He's in your sitting-room."

"Delighted," said Kent. He could see the shadow of a man's head and shoulders cast by the lamp on the reed blind. A moment later he met the man.

A tall young fellow, red-haired and loose jointed, and with a face that commanded mirth; not a funny face—rather good-looking, in fact—but a face which was the index of an extraordinary dynamic jollity, something more precious in this weary world than wisdom, far more precious than beauty.

Rud Saddleman was this individual's name.

"Delighted," said Kent, as Adams introduced them. "Delighted to see you. You'll stay to supper, of course, and stop the night—or as long as the ship's here?" He was only extending the ordinary island hospitality, but he did it with a verve and a warmth that to an onlooker might have indicated this stranger as a long-lost friend.

It was really the bubbling joy caused by Adams's unexpected arrival that had to find expression.

One doesn't long for clergymen as an ordinary rule, but as the hart pants for the water brook Kent had been panting for Adams; and so would you, perhaps, if you had been in Kent's position, wanting only a parson to confer bliss upon you.

Supper was a jolly affair.

Adams did not wear a white choker in public or in private life; he could enjoy palm toddy as well as a palm salad, and a smoking-room story, if it were really humorous.

But it was after supper that the sun shone in the person of Mr. Rud Saddleman. He was an auctioneer by trade, it seemed, or at least a student, so to speak, learning the art, and with enough money of his own to start him in a good way of business when he was fully fledged. Meanwhile, owing to some chest trouble, he had been ordered to the Islands for six months' change of air.

Kent gathered this information during the evening—which lasted till past midnight—and he retired to rest with his head full of Saddleman, or rather Saddleman's effluence, and the thought that if this man could only infect an auction-room crowd with his own *joie de vivre* and cheery optimism, what an auctioneer he would make!

III.

NEXT morning, leaving Adams and the other one smoking on the veranda, Kent rowed off to the *Sea Horse*.

Knowing that she was going on to Ponape he wished to entrust her Captain with a letter for Stason, one of the traders there.

Captain Stringer appeared at the rail as the boat came alongside. He had never seen Kent before, but he welcomed him like an old friend and hiked him down below to the stuffy cabin, smelling of cockroaches and kanakas and old cargoes of copra, lit by a sky-light grown dingy with sea salt and adorned with a photograph of Mrs. Stringer, a lady of fifty, pinned to a bulkhead.

"Stuffy, ain't it?" said the Captain, after the business was over, "change comin' in the weather. I'll be gettin' out right away, if it's all the same to you and young Saddleman, he'd better put off at once when you get back—but have a spot of Bourbon first."

He went to a locker for the bottle, and as he did so the mate's voice came down the companion-way.

"There's a hell of a buster coming, Cap, better send for that chap ashore. I'm gettin' the fore canvas on her now—we'll have to get out pronto."

"All right, all right," answered Stringer, bottle in hand, "needn't be teachin' me my business. I'll give the word, not you—cocky chap," he finished, turning to Kent, "I've always to be larnin' him which is mate and which is master—say when." He filled. Kent drank, and was just putting his tumbler back on the table, when Stringer, who had turned to look at the barometer, gave a shout.

"The hurricane's on us," yelled Stringer. "Out with her, or she'll be drivin' on them reefs to suth'ard."

"Hell's bells!" cried the Captain, "the bottom's fell out of the glass."

He turned and rushed up the companion-way, followed by Kent.

The north had turned black, the island palms were dancing and tossing and the boat was gone from the side; she was half-way to the shore, the kanaka oarsmen rowing like all possessed.

"Sent her off to fetch the chap and save time," cried the mate, against the thrashing of the canvas he had raised and the whistling of the wind in the standing rigging. "It's comin' along."

"Comin' along—comin' along. It's on us," yelled Stringer. "Out with her, damn the anchor, knock the shackle off the chain, out with her or she'll be drivin' on them reefs to suth'ard."

The hum of the hurricane that had developed swift as an unbottled djinn could be heard like the sound of a vast spinning top; not a fraction of a split second was to be lost and Kent, in that wild moment, forgot the boat, the island, and all earthly things as with chain and anchor gone the *Sea Horse* made to clear the reefs lying to southward.

She just did it, the burbling and boiling foam on the coral not ten yards from her counter, and as she did it and took the lift of the sea, the first great wave of the coming storm hit the reef, raising a column of spindrift like a gigantic ghost.

Then the hurricane flung the edge of its flying cloak over the face of the sun, and from the shore the old brig could be seen grey as a ghost in the gloom, saved from the reefs, indeed, but delivered over to the mercy of the tumultuous seas.

IV

She was driven three hundred miles like a hare before the hounds. The North Equatorial current which flows from east to west above the Carolines and Marshalls, and sends a branch running south between the groups, helped her along, and then she found herself under a sky blue as the heart of a sapphire and with the N.E. trades to help her to the west and Ponape.

Kent tried to induce Stringer to head right back for Kingsway, but the Captain of the *Sea Horse*, in the words of the mate, "wasn't having any."

As a matter of fact, he had committed an unwisdom in calling at Kingsway at all, the money that Adams had paid for the deviation would not cover the time spent, but he had done it and no doubt the blandishments of Saddleman, who, as a passenger, had almost the status of a super-cargo, helped in the business.

Saddleman, who had heard of Kingsway, wanted to see it. Well, he had got what he wanted, but Stringer had lost, not only time, which is money, but temper, over this matter, and Kent, who wanted to see Kingsway worse than Saddleman had ever done, failed to get what he wanted.

"Can't be done," said Stringer, "you say you have only fifty dollars on you, but you'll give me a cheque for a thousand if I put you on the beach? No, I ain't riskin' nothing more, there's a hoodoo on that beach, if you ask me, or we wouldn't be landed like this with the old *Sea Horse* all sprung spars and leakin' timbers. No, Siree Bob, I ain't puttin' back to that beach, but you can have a free passage to Ponape

and you'll be able easy there to get a vessel to take you back."

Which proved not the fact. Kent put up with his friend Stason, and Stason sympathized with him, and was, in fact, glad to have him, for Ponape has all sorts of pleasant things about it, but little company for a lone living man.

"Stay a hundred years, if you like," said Stason, "I'll be only too glad to have you." But Kent did not want to stay a hundred years, he wanted to get back to Kingsway and the woman he loved, and the parson who was waiting to marry him to her.

But there was no ship to take him. There was a schooner just putting out for Brisbane and there was a barque due in, but she was going on to Port Moresby, which is an interesting place, but a place Kent did not want to see just now.

There was nothing else in view or in prospect and nothing to be done but wait. You see, to lose a Pacific island as Kent had lost Kingsway, is easier than to pick it up again. There are no taxi-cabs on the Pacific, no telephones; in other words, no dependable connexions between the small islands or between the small islands and the continental coasts.

Of course there are the trade ships going between trade stations and the American and Australian seaboards, but you have to hit the time of their sailing as well as the place, and as for inter-island schooners, they are, as far as any special destination is concerned, ships of chance.

A schooner might be going to Kingsway next week, or next month, or not for six months. That was the prospect, and before it Kent did not sit down.

He might be a medium-sized, mouse-coloured man with an undecided manner, but he was in love, and also he was a man. One of those people who are richer underneath than on the surface, and of whom you may say that the deeper you dig into them the more man-stuff you bring up.

There was no ship for him; well, he would take a canoe. He was used to island canoes.

When he said this to Stason, Stason thought he had gone clean crazy.

"Why, it's a thousand miles," said the trader, "and there's not a kanaka here would go with you for a thousand pounds."

"Don't want one," replied Kent. "I reckon I can do it alone. I've thought the whole thing out. Sipi, that old chap on the beach, has a right-down good outrigger he'll sell me for eleven pounds. Stringer can let me have three water breakers, I've a Waltham watch as good as a ship's chronometer, and you can let me have that big compass for a loan, if you will, the one you have in the sitting-room—you've got some charts, too.

"I've only got fifty dollars, but I'll give you my cheque for fifty, if you'll square it with Sipi and get me the grub I'll want. Let's see. A hundred dollars is twenty pounds. Eleven for the canoe, five for grub, say, and the balance to you against the compass and that old sextant and chart—how does that work out?"

"Madness! Madness!" cried Stason. All the same, later that day, realizing that he had to do with a force beyond his control, he gave in.

Two years before the *Maranga*, a barque of two hundred tons, had been wrecked to the north of Ponape, and Stason had bought, as a speculation, the bones and the pickings, amongst which were the contents of the chart locker and the sextant. The things were useless to him and he was ready enough to let Kent have them for nothing. As a matter of fact, when the full nature of Kent's fantastic scheme had time to sink into his brain he became enthusiastic.

After embarking, himself, on some safety-last adventure, nothing pleases an Englishman more than to assist another man on the job. So it came about that two days later the canoe of Sipi, having been bought and overhauled, was launched and loaded.

She looked like a fruiterer's shop with green drinking nuts lashed to the ratan bridge of the outrigger and bananas and taro and what-not stored above the water breakers and biscuit bags. Then, in the golden late afternoon of a day that seemed dropped from Paradise, urged by the very same wind that once filled the sails of the fleet bound for Troy, the ship of Kent, its mat sail filling, passed the reefs of Ponape and the thunder of their surf.

Stason, watching, saw it like a withered leaf on the far reaches of the swell. Then the sunset took it and handed it over to night and that deity who presides over the dreams and doings of lovers—the full moon.

V.

HE wrecked her on Kazaput, a wretched islet of ten palm trees, only a hundred miles from Kingsway.

One of those squalls that break suddenly out of the blue broke out as he was passing this wretched place that seemed set like a trap for him, and landed him, canoe and all, high above ordinary tide marks, with a broken outrigger and all sorts of damage that seemed irreparable, notwithstanding which he had lost neither his sextant nor his charts, nor the water breakers that had been securely lashed amidships. There was, fortunately, a rock cistern filled by the last rains and food enough in the way of

"You go an' tackle old Saddleman, and don't come shoutin' at me," said the beachcomber

nuts, crabs, taro, and turtles' eggs to keep him alive as long as he chose to live on that place, which fact having been made clear to him, this indefatigable man proceeded to mend the canoe.

It seemed quite a hopeless business, but that did not daunt him. He had a jack-knife and the palm trees provided coconut sennit; he had the ingenuity that laughs at locksmiths and a natural power for continuing that was colossal. It took him a month, but at the end of the month the outrigger was as strong as it had ever been, the ratan bridge restored, and the other injuries repaired.

The canoe was herself again—and then he found he could not launch her.

You see, she had been beached sideways, and she was just the thing the wind wanted.

The wind simply loves to pile sand up against anything that offers a chance, and though the thing had been done gently, almost imperceptibly, and the sand ridge against the planking seemed nothing much, the result, plus the fact that the canoe had settled a bit, was enough.

He could no more have launched her single-handed than he could have launched St. Paul's into the Thames. It was a four-men's job, so he sat down to wait for the four men to come, having first tied his shirt to a palm tree as a distress signal.

They were over four months in coming. Kazaput does not attract ships. All the same, one day the schooner *Leonora*, chancing along and attracted by the signal, dropped a boat whose crew helped him with the launching. He refused all other help, assured in his mind now that all his little difficulties were over.

VI.

HE sighted Kingsway in a pink and pearly dawn, and as the sun raised himself, dropping the clinging sea like a cloak, the scent of the island came across the waters on the land wind.

He beached before noon.

The canoe had drawn no attention. Anyone noticing it would have taken it for a canoe from the north beach or from the fishing village to southward. Kent guessed this. All the same, it was strange beaching her and not a soul to welcome him or show surprise. He was just as happy, for he wanted to shave and attempt a hair-cut before seeing people—all the same, it was strange and rather daunting.

Schenck, the beachcomber, undrunk for a miracle, was seated on the sands mending a crab pot of his own invention; he did not recognize the bearded man coming towards him till the man stopped and said, "Hello, Schenck."

"O my Goramighty!" cried Schenck, making to get up; then, seeing this was no figure of gin since it cast a shadow, and that without doubt it was Kent, miraculously returned, resumed his place.

"Why, you was reckoned dead," said Schenck, in the semi-aggrieved tone of a person before a shade of colour that does not match what it is wanted to match.

"Well, I reckon I'm not," said Kent.

"O my Goramighty!" crowed the beachcomber over whose gin-blistered intelligence the sun of a great and remembered fact suddenly had burst. "Why, you was goin' to be married to that trollope."

"What trollope!"

"Old Brand's darter."

"Damn you," shouted Kent; "two pins I'd break your drunken neck—what do you mean?"

"Better break two," said Schenck; "you go'n' tackle old Saddle-what's-his-name and don't come shoutin' at me. They was married a fortnit ago and went off last week for Brisbin."

Saddleman had done the trick.

Schenck's animosity against the lady had for only basis the fact that he had tried to gate-crash at the wedding party, and had been ejected without even a drink—but he enjoyed rubbing it into Kent, who stood and listened to details and then went off to his house which was still in commission owing to the fact that Sru, his man-servant and cook, had stayed on, taking his family to live with him.

Kent ejected the family and washed himself and changed his clothes, for Sru had scrupulously respected all his belongings.

Well, that was that.

Somehow the news had found him not unprepared. The want of welcome on the beach, though it had nothing to do with the business, had, in some strange way, discounted it. He was not angry with Saddleman; one doesn't get angry with Death; and as for Kate, well, just now he was so stunned that he could scarcely think clearly about her.

But on the morrow the whole matter had clarified and settled down in his mind. Thinking him dead, she had got married and gone off to live in Brisbane. That was how the thing came to him, and he might have wrung his hands at the thought of the fatality that had delayed him at Kazaput, only for the thought that her love for him could not have been very deep else she wouldn't have married Saddleman in such a devil of a hurry.

That mortified his mind, and mortification of the mind, unlike mortification of the body, is often preservative.

It preserved him anyhow from wild

regrets, but it did not destroy her image. Just as there are one-man dogs, there are one-woman men.

Having loved this woman and even still loving her, Kent would never look at another. That might have been predicted from his nature, and the prediction would not have been falsified.

He went on with his life at Kingsway, and after a month or so began to enjoy living again and to take an interest in his business, but he did not shave his beard. It made him look horrid and ten years older, and he didn't like it, but he didn't shave it, and he didn't know exactly why he didn't shave it. It was like a flag hung out by his sub-conscious mind, a signal saying to the fair sex of the world :—

" I've done with you."

VII.

TIME did not alter things.

Years and years went by, and still the flag flew to all the breezes of the Pacific. He made money, and several nice girls, despite the beard, and because of himself and those liquid trusting eyes of his, made advances to him. But he clung to Kate, or rather she clung to him, with a tenacity that increased with the years.

The farther she got from him the more desirable she seemed.

Age does not spoil an image like this. Like an antique chair, the older it is the more romantic. Of course, he was not always polishing and looking at this antique belonging of his, but it was there, often remembered, often unthought of, till one day in Sydney, passing a real estate office, he saw the name of Saddleman over the door.

The name, distinctive as a shot tower, made him pause, then he went into the office, and there was Saddleman standing by a desk talking to one of his clerks.

An older Saddleman but the same. Kent, safe in the disguise of his beard, asked some questions about real estate, and Saddleman waxed communicative.

They went into the inner office and turned from real estate to Pacific talk, becoming most friendly, till Saddleman, inspired by the chumminess that is in the air of Sydney, said : " Well, if you've got the time, come up to my house, No. 8, Pacific Avenue, any evening at nine and I'll show you those Island head-dresses I was telling you of—come this evening, if you like."

" Thank you," said Kent, and took his departure. He had given his name to Saddleman as Brown. He did not want to see Saddleman again. Saddleman had brought home to him with a punch the real loss he had suffered. Saddleman had brought Kate right up from the past as a living figure. She was married to him—married to him—a warm, living woman, not a memory. No, he did not want to see Saddleman again ; yet at nine o'clock he was in Pacific Avenue, and at one minute past nine he was pressing the door bell of No. 8.

He could no more resist the invitation than the iron filing can resist the magnet.

Would Kate be there ?

A neat servant maid opened the door and showed him into a sitting-room well furnished but unwelcoming. Stiff, highly polished, smug—but anyhow, there were two easy chairs and Kent took his place in one whilst waiting developments.

In a few minutes his host came in, he was carrying two of the Island head-dresses he had mentioned, also a cigarette tin under his arm. Then, seated opposite one another in the armchairs, they fell to talking, and all the time in the room, in the house, in the conversation, not a sign or word of Kate.

The fact that Saddleman was older than the years might warrant, and different from himself, had struck Kent at the office. It struck him again now.

At the office he had seemed a man under the weight of business affairs, but here, now, contrasting him with the man of Kingsway, he seemed to have lost life somehow, or to be suffering from some secret sorrow. Could it be—could it be that Kate was dead ?

Or was it simply that the extraordinarily vivacious Saddleman of Kingsway Island had just sobered up during the years.

However that might be, as the conversation went on Saddleman began to improve and his old talking powers to come back a bit. Then, lifting his finger and saying : " Wait a moment," out he went and returned with a bottle of whisky, two glasses, and a syphon.

The whizz of the syphon sounded pleasantly in that stiff room, and now, warmed by the whisky, the real estate agent began to drop his added years and to take the conversation into his own hands as he had done that night so long ago.

He began to tell stories, and the stories were all, strangely enough, about long ago. Times when he was a very young man and went to San Francisco to get a training in business and when he first came to Sydney.

Yarns like those he had told that night with Adams as a listener, but never a word about Kingsway.

Kent once or twice tried to lead the conversation towards the Carolines and Marshalls, with the only result that Saddleman cut in with a story he had heard of Bully Hayes, whose old brig was wrecked somewhere in the Carolines.

" Have you ever been married ? " suddenly asked Kent.

The question came to his lips half against his will.

"Married," said Saddleman, checking suddenly at the queston like a horse at a fence. "Me? Oh, yes—why?"

"Is your wife alive?" was the question just rising to Kent's tongue; a question that might have entailed the revelation of who he was, when a sound from the room above interposed. There are sounds such as the slip and fall of snow from a roof that are quite distinctive, and the heavy thump on the floor of the room above had a character of its own.

It was as though someone had jumped out of bed in a hurry and possibly through irritation.

Saddleman looked up, all the *joie de vivre* had vanished from his face; he was like a lamp suddenly turned down.

Followed heavy steps from the room above and the sound of a door flung open; then a voice.

"Rud!"

"A minute," said Saddleman. He rose up and left the room in a hurry, forgetting to shut the door.

"*Rud!*" came the voice again, sharp and hard this time, "*are* you coming up to bed—sitting there all night talking-and-talking?" This, though it was only half-past ten.

"All right, Kate," came Saddleman's voice, "I'm just coming—one minute."

He returned to the room, he looked like a dog that has been cuffed about the ears.

"The wife's got a cold and I've got to go up to her," said he, "you'll excuse me, won't you——?"

But Kent was already on his feet, hat in hand.

"That's all right," said Kent, "that's all right."

"Drop into the office any time," said Saddleman, as he let him out, "delighted to see you."

"Right," said Kent.

He found himself in Pacific Avenue. A great full moon was lighting Sydney and the harbour; the same full moon that had lit him at Ponape fifteen years ago, when he had started his voyage into the world of Romance.

The wonderful voyage that had ended only to-night.

ACROSTICS

OUR forty-ninth series of acrostics begins with No. 221, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will, at the conclusion of the series, be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 221.
(*The First of the Series.*)

FORMER brings latter;
You find them waiting on the breakfast-table,
And if to answer them you are not able,
Well, does it matter?

1. Liquid it holds; a rhyming word
   May prison be, or wind, or bird.
2. Opening it is, or should begin,
   If I can be observed within.
3. A house that Londoners will know;
   To find the county, westward go.
4. One word, a rushing stream is it;
   Two words, a rocky peak and split.
5. Blind, luckless three! The farmer's wife
   Wrought havoc with a carving-knife.
6. A British monarch was renowned
   For mighty sword and table round.
7. Almost unnecessary these,
   Which from the Hampshire coast one sees.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 221 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on December 10th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else should be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 220.

THOUGH now long centuries have passed away,
Remember, says the rhyme, that fateful day.

1. He bore the name of Jewish king, afloat
   He served his country, read what laureate wrote.
2. In play the club is taken by the queen,
   No trace of drink at present can be seen.
3. Choose one of four, take word that means the same,
   This adjective concerns its other name.
4. Little, we tell you; if you ask for more,
   Ghosts had appeared not many years before.
5. No country claims him, but his heart is here,
   The mathematical parts must disappear.
6. What may be made of fibre, and is short,
   To legal folk has fame and fortune brought.
7. One word, the first part of great city, take:
   One word subtract, the last part of a cake.
8. "Thither of old, earth's giant son to view,
   On wings of wind with" him, we read, they flew.

PAX.

1. N	isbe	T
2. O	mp	H
3. V	iperin	E
4. E	yol	F
5. M	opol	I
6. B	rie	F
7. E	igh	T
8. R	hadamant	H

NOTES.—Light 1. Lieutenant Josiah Nisbet. See Southey's "Life of Nelson," ch. 4. Light 2. Omphale, the club of Hercules, alc. 3. The four seasons: summer, adder, viper. 4. "Little Eyolf," "Ghosts," Ibsen's plays. 5. Cosmopolitan; cos, tan, in trigonometry. 6. Fibre, brief, anagrams. 7. "Nineveh, that great city" (Jonah, ch. 4, verse 11); scone. Nine, subtract one. 8. Pope's translation of the Odyssey, book 7, very near the end.

THE STORY OF COCKTAILS

As Pictured by W. Heath Robinson and Described by Anthony Armstrong

IF Fate ever leads you to board the new Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Britain* and when, five minutes later, natural instinct leads you to the cocktail bar, you will, as you tilt your first glass, see depicted on the ceilings and the upper half of the walls somebody you think you recognize. "Surely," you will say to the bar-tender, "I know that old gentleman with the bald head, the double chin, and the large glasses? And that one with the white top-hat, the serious experimental expression, and the umbrella? And that composite length of string, chain, and cord with knots, that disintegrating pulley, that patched hose-pipe, and that cog-wheel with two molars and a bicuspid missing. Weren't they used in the '*Ingenious Labour-Saving Device of a Gentleman who wanted to Scratch his Head during the Sermon*' or something?"

"Quite right," the bar-tender will reply. "It was Mr. Heath Robinson who drew those decorations. . . . Another Martini? Certainly, sir. . . ."

For all round the Knickerbocker Bar of the *Empress of Britain* can be traced the full details of the making of cocktails, as only W. Heath Robinson could see them, from the first picking, grading, and polishing of the cherries, down to the mass production of cocktails for their ultimate home. An absorbing theme! You find you have absorbed about three Martinis before you realize it—which may or may not be the idea.

It is perhaps a pity that the bar wasn't bigger, then the artist might have devoted further panels to the history of the cocktail itself. It has never even been related in print, let alone in line and colour. Indeed, very little has been written about cocktails at all, except books of recipes, and they mostly consist of pages and pages of this sort of thing:—

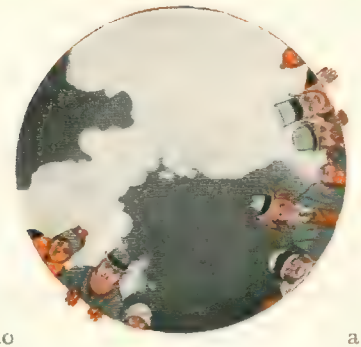
86. *THE DRAGON'S-BREATH.*
⅓ Gin, ⅓ Italian Vermouth, ⅓ French Vermouth, ⅓ Green Chartreuse. Shake well in a "Rattlit" Cocktail Shaker (17*s.* 6*d. of all dealers*).

87. *THE KNOCK-ME-DOWN.*
⅓ Gin, ⅓ Italian Vermouth, ⅓ French Vermouth, ⅓ Yellow Chartreuse. Shake well in a "Rattlit" Cocktail Shaker (17*s.* 6*d. of all dealers*).

88. *THE KICK-IN-THE-PANTS.*
⅓ Gin, ⅓ Italian Vermouth, ⅓ French Vermouth . . .

and so on, for weeks.

The Cocktail Bird.



Sky high.

Now that doesn't tell you much about the cocktail, its history, its origin, or even its effects. There are, for example, no books by learned *savants*, the opening chapters of which inform us that the cocktail was in constant use in, say, Ancient Egypt. Indeed, now I come to think of it, the only recorded instance of any Egyptian cocktail was when Queen Cleopatra mixed up a drink and dissolved in it a pearl of incalculable value. My own theory is that she didn't really mean to dissolve it; it was just that the local gin wasn't too good. However, history insists that she did it on purpose, and that it was to impress Antony, the Roman, with her wealth and munificence. The fact that, having mixed it, she drank it herself, probably didn't impress him quite so much. But it can't ever have been a popular recipe for the middle-class home, and on the whole it is extremely unlikely that the ancient Egyptians had ever heard of cocktails. As a matter of fact, without being an Egyptologist, one only has to look at the pictured faces of early Egyptians—so unlike the happy "Heath Robinson" expressions of Those Who Have Partaken—to realize that not one of the poor hoots could ever have tasted a "Side-car" in his life. The well-preserved condition of Egyptian mummies, by the way, is no proof of habitual employment of cocktails: it was probably obtained by means of "*wiski*," a species of embalming fluid.

Moreover, in those days they certainly didn't have preserved cherries—perhaps one should say embalmed cherries—and what is a cocktail without a cherry? Like an orchestra without a conductor; like a girl without a lipstick. It is obvious that

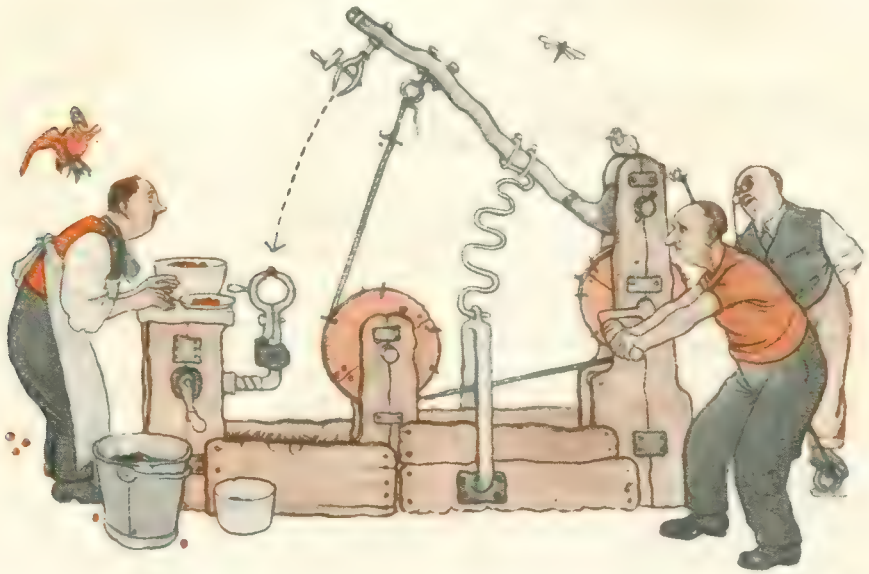
Grading and picking cherries.

In the clouds.

Heath Robinson's cocktail makers realize this important fact. About three-quarters of his decoration concerns the cherry—its grading, stoning, polishing, sticking, testing and what-not. And rightly, too. A rough, unpolished cherry just spoils the look of a cocktail. Apart from the fact that if you drop it off the stick as you put it in your mouth it falls *squaff!* on your waistcoat, like a pat of warm butter, and stays there. Whereas a nice, shiny, slippery cherry, so polished that it might almost have been educated at Eton, will just slide unobtrusively off on to the floor like an eighteenth-century squire. From there you can kick it under someone else's stool.

Cherry-testing you can also see is considered very important by the artist. Again rightly. About the presence of a bad cherry in a cocktail—a cherry that has gone gooey in the centre as if it were trying to be a stuffed olive—I hardly like to speak. Theoretically, one should at once indignantly pour the tainted cocktail over the floor, or, if well-brought-up, over the bar-tender. In practice, it is pretty hard to do this—particularly if the bar-tender is a big fellow or if you have paid for that round yourself. The best way out of the difficulty is to leave the cherry to the end, when it will be too late to do anything about the cocktail. Except, of course, angrily order another and see if you can't get it free.

Although in complete agreement with Heath Robinson on the importance of the cherry, I am very sorry to see that he is not so sound upon ingredients. He follows, unfortunately, the American tradition.



Stoning cherries.

Polishing cherries.

For there are to-day two schools of thought about mixing cocktails—American and European. The European, of course, is only acquired. The cocktail was quite unknown in, say, Saxon England. In the first place the Saxons drank ale—and they did not do it as a recreation, mark you, but as a profession. Indeed, the celebrated navigator, Wulfstan, called Weolfisthelmstane for short, on return from a business trip to Esthonia, reported to King Alfred, as the most amazing thing of all about that country, that they *brewed no ale there*. Obviously, therefore, the Saxons were not a people likely to have any time for a short snort, or anything of less measure than a quart. And in the second place they *only* drank ale. They only *had* ale to drink; and a thing like a cocktail, the essence of which is that it shall be a compound of various liquors, can hardly be made from one beverage alone. I mean, if the Venerable Bede or the Superannuated Aelfrede or one of that crowd had brought out a booklet beginning like this :—

YE BOKE OF COC-TAEGELS.

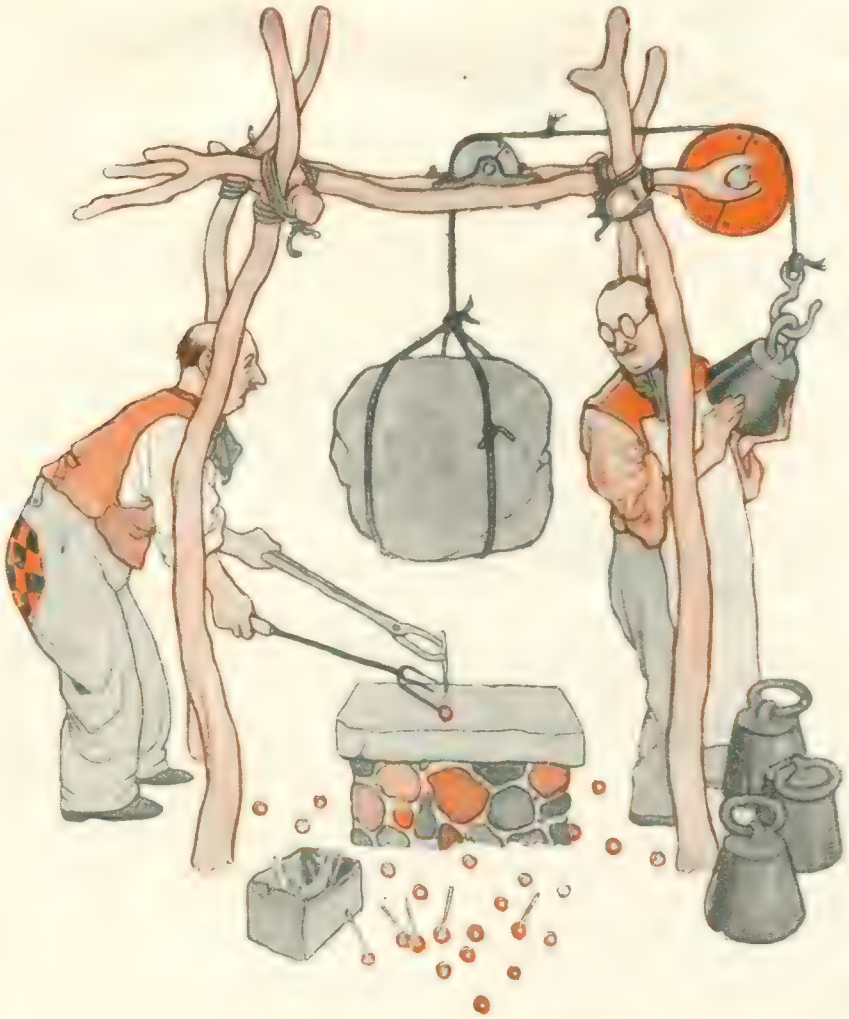
1. Ye MAYDEN'S DOWNEFALLE.

Take of ale one iii^{d} parte, of ale one iii^{d} parte, of ale one iii^{d} parte, and also of ale one iii^{d} parte; mingle stronglie . .

and so on for several pages—well, he'd never have got away with it, or been likely to have reached the stage of superannuation necessary to win a Venerability title.

No, the whole idea of the cocktail was really American. At great trouble and expense the *Mayflower* with a complement of some nine hundred thousand (*vide* family genealogical tables in the States) sailed across the Atlantic merely in order to invent and send back the cocktail to England; and so for some while Americans were the only people who knew how to make the things. For years this benighted country considered that anything over two different liquors (one of which had to be gin) mixed vaguely together and poured into a small glass made a cocktail—as long as it was done by a man in a near-white jacket and you had a brass rail for your foot and a brass cuspidor for interior decoration. France took even longer to get the idea: why, barely eight years ago I was given a "cocktail" in a *Bar Americaine* in Boulogne which was largely composed of aniseed. For the rest of my stay in France I was never followed by less than forty-two dogs of varying size and chassis construction. But that is by the way. In time Europe learnt better, and though never strong on shaking and ice, at any rate used correct components.

The present American school of thought, on the other hand, particularly since Prohibition, doesn't seem to worry any more



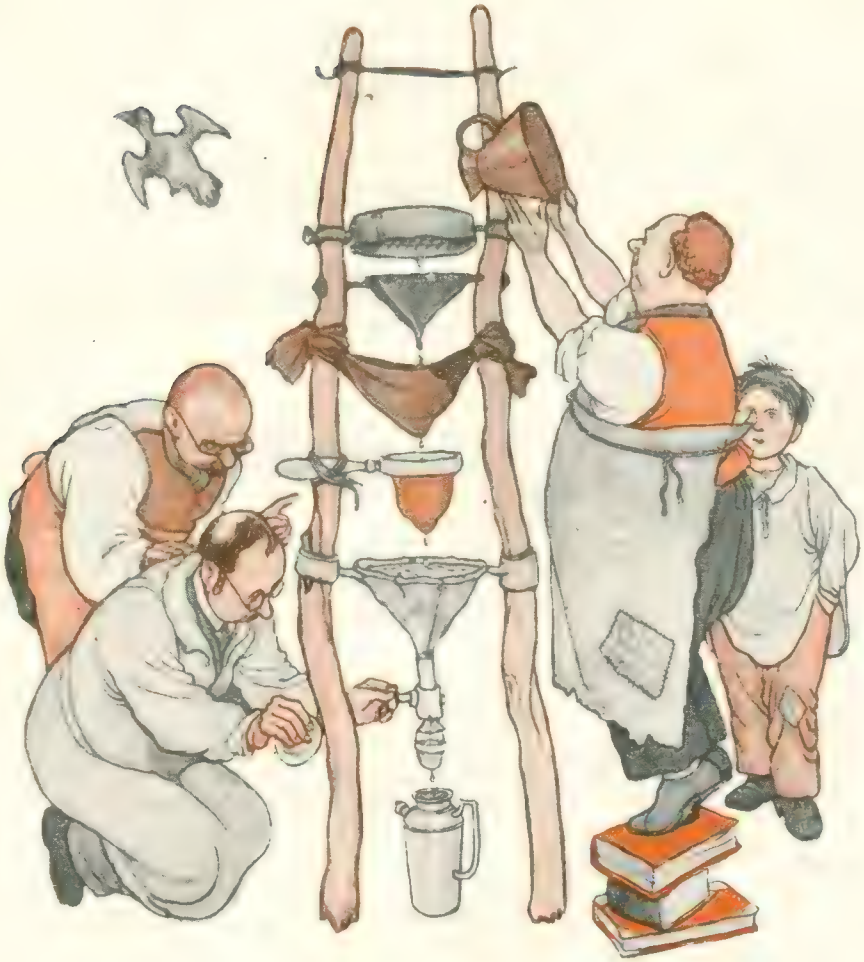
Putting the sticks into cherries.

about what actually goes *into* the cocktail, as long as the thing is well mixed and is cold. I have even known benzine put into one, but I am informed it was by mistake. I was glad to hear it. The man who did it was mixing for a large party, but he explained to me that he didn't have to throw the mixture away, because luckily he had been able to hide the bottle *before anyone else saw the benzine label.* That just shows you. A few did mention that the cocktails seemed pretty powerful, and couldn't manage more than four, but in a country where the flesh is always willing but the spirit is strong, there was no widespread comment. True, one man while lighting a cigarette had his cocktail explode in his hand; but that, of course, was looked on as a sort of compliment to the host.

Cocktail kindness.

The shaking and the ice, on the contrary, are considered most important in the States. No good American can live without ice, while as for cocktail shakers the country is ankle deep in them. Ever since the

Naming new cocktails.



Clarifying cocktails.

cocktail-shaker cult of some few years ago, people have had shakers in the house as other persons have blackbeetles. The shop-windows were crammed with them; they were absolutely the thing to give friends on birthdays, Christmas Day, Independence Day, Mother's Day, or any old day. The bigger and stronger the shaker, the better the gift. Indeed, I know one young couple, living in a small house, who were presented with an electrically-driven shaker of such incredible size and power that they never could use it. It was too strong for them. Whenever they connected it up and tried, it was the house and its occupants that got shaken, not the contents of the shaker.

Yes, study of Heath Robinson's drawing of the "Mass Production of Cocktails" certainly makes me think that he follows the American custom. He has, for instance, a large box of ice. He has, too, an enormous machine for shaking the mixture in three, if not four, dimensions. And for all this, he has a bare eight or nine bottles—one of which I am certain is the benzine one; while another, though I can hardly believe it, smells from here like Chambertin. The use of a bath, too, is typically American. America is the only place where I have ever had liquor made in the bath.

Cocktail civilization probably spread Westwards from America as well as Eastwards. Heath Robinson shows in another illustration that the cocktail is apparently prevalent in the Orient, and speaking as one who hasn't been out East, I agree with him

Saved from suicide.

entirely. In the early days, by the way, they used to carry the baby at the back of the four-seater family-saloon elephant and the cocktail in front, but they found they couldn't trust the elephant. Opponents of American infiltration try to make out that the cocktail was not introduced to the East by America and that it had long been known in the ancient Orient. The German professor, Gosch, for instance, in his very readable little pamphlet on Assyrian Table Manners, Customs, and Philosophy, entitled "Assiriologischedurchgangarbeititersittenundgebräuchephilosophie" ("Bill" to friends)—published by the Kiddie Book Press at 9d.—says that the swift and enthusiastic conquests of Arabia, Egypt, Elam, Porlam, Odam, and other surrounding countries by the Assyrian king, Assur-Helpa-Pal, were directly due to the impact of half-a-dozen "Tiglath-Tilelooseners," as the monarch's favourite snifters were called. This drink, he adds, an artistic mixture of "*sloosh*" and "*slush*," to which a little later was added "*hiqqup*," was known to the Assyrians as "*querck*." It was pronounced, after the third, as "*uerck*," the "*q*" being missed as in dress rehearsal. Hence perhaps the present-day way of referring to a new cocktail as a "uerck of art." Or again perhaps not. Another German professor, Lobbster, disagrees. He holds that, judging from the representations of Assyrian kings on monuments, no cocktail ever brewed by them could have been powerful enough to erode its way through all that beard. Naturally, the date was prior to the passing of the Volstead Act.

Whether the cocktail has been to the advantage of civilization or not, it is difficult to say. It has not been in existence long enough to make itself properly felt. Had, for instance, it been known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—I mean, had

Testing a new brew.

Cocktail courage.

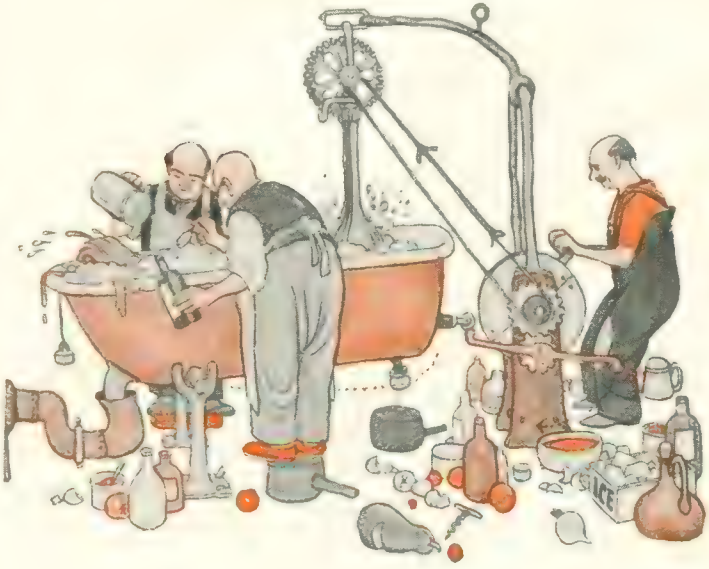
Queen Elizabeth, say, only sucked down a couple of "Whitechapel Whistlers" at the right time—or even at the wrong time—the whole course of civilization might have been changed for the better, and Englishmen now might not be labouring under the disability of there being certain hours in the day when they can't get a drink. Or, if you are in the habit of looking at the question from the other point of view, of there being certain hours in the day when they still *can* get a drink. At any rate, one cannot deny that in those days there did seem to be an opening for the cocktail. The right spirit was abroad. A certain Henry Aldrich, born 1647, a noted scholar, architect, philosopher, musician, poet, drinker, and clergyman—he also painted in his spare time—wrote a short Latin epigram embodying the five reasons for drinking. They were:—

1. The arrival of a friend.
2. Good wine.
3. Because you are thirsty at the time.
4. Because you are likely to be thirsty in the future.
5. Any other reason.

Here, one would say, was a fellow who was made for the cocktail, and it seems a pity the cocktail wasn't made for him.

As regards modern civilization, the cocktail certainly appears to have conferred some definite benefits, if we can believe Mr. Heath Robinson's picture, "A Pleasant Surprise." Anything that reduces the horrors of that long, thirsty walk of twenty to thirty yards between the eighteenth and the nineteenth holes cannot but be to the good. Aeroplaning, too, has evidently benefited—if you can stretch your head back far enough when in the Knickerbocker bar. Why, with a good cocktail the pilot seems quite unnecessary!

But what about social and home life?



The mass production of cocktails.

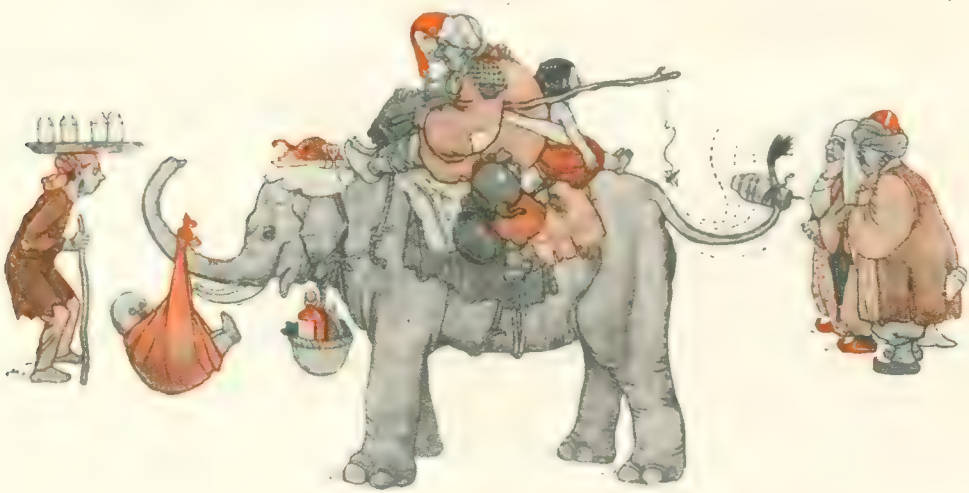
A pleasant surprise.

Here, apparently, opinion must be divided. Certainly the cocktail, in its most conglomerate form—the cocktail party—has led (human nature being what it is) to the hour for evening dinner being set back to anywhere between 8.45 and 9.45 p.m., which must be a definite disadvantage for the domestics who have to serve it and clear away afterwards. This may ultimately result in Social Upheaval and Revolution. On the other hand, cocktail parties have led to very many people definitely going without dinner, which is good for the figure ; or even, round about 10.30 p.m. or so, to their getting to think they must have had dinner after all—which is better still.

Briefly, however, the case for and against the cocktail party as an element of modern social life may be summed up as under :—

ADVANTAGES.

(a) It assists guests in getting rid of shyness, self-consciousness, false modesty, and other inhibitions and complexes right at the beginning of the evening.



The cocktail in the East.

The famous Knickerbocker Bar on the "Empress of Britain," decorated by Mr. Heath Robinson's delightful paintings of the story of a cocktail from start to finish.

(b) It gives a host a chance of using up all the odds and ends of liquors he has about the house.

(c) It enables people to tell the Story of their Life to sympathetic though not necessarily receptive ears.

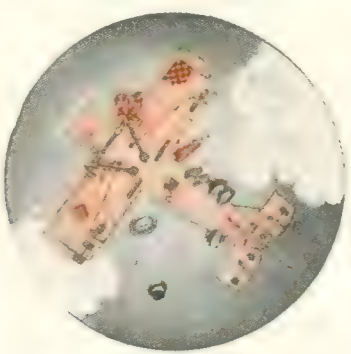
(d) It offers an opportunity of acquiring long-standing friendships without really having to stand the friend for longer than an hour.

DISADVANTAGES.

(a) (b) (c) and (d) as above.

And now, if you will excuse me—it's just on six, and I have an important appointment. . . .

Yes, I shall insist that there is a graded, stoned, tested, and highly polished cherry in it!



CAPTAIN KEN

BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by TRESILIAN

It was during one of those temporary lulls in the conversation round the extremely well-populated supper-table at Chiddenham Hall that the robust and remotely brassy voice of August Chiddenham—nineteen years old but conscious that he possessed the wisdom of one double the age—broke upon the silence.

"The sudden-death epidemic among the yap-dogs of this parish continues," he said, in the manner of one who is effortlessly sardonic. "If anybody happens to be interested."

"What do you mean, August?" asked Mrs. Chiddenham.

"In plain English," added sister Ella, who, on occasion, really could be more than tolerably sarcastic.

August shrugged loftily. He was in the lofty stage of life.

"Oh, nothing of any importance, mother. I thought I'd mention it as a—a—curio of country life. Old Lady Downsmore's Peke has gone the way of all the local yap-dogs. So they say. Found just inside the drive gate as dead as last year's charity. The creature had a hole in its Peke-shaped body the size of a .22 bullet. Somebody shot it—probably it was asking to be shot—at the top of its voice!"

"But that's the third lap-dog that's been shot about here in the last two months," said Nelson Chiddenham.

"I really do think something ought to be done about it. It's perfectly clear that somebody is going about killing these—little dogs!" said sister Ella.

Fair August agreed in his own way.

"I know, I know," he said. "If Nelse's celebrated blood-dog was all we are advised to believe it is, it—it and Nelse—would track down this lap-dog killer in no time!" he stated more loudly.

This was such a time-worn back-hander at Nelson's bloodhound-setter, Red Sleuth, that Nelson did not even stop eating his honest supper. He was accustomed to Aug.

But Aug had set vibrating in his mind a string that was already awaiting vibration. It *was* odd, this singular mortality among the small pet dogs of the neighbourhood.

As Nelson had said, this was the third. All found dead, all perforated—bullet-holed, as one might say.

Another point suggested itself—a very practical one.

"Is Lady Downsmore offering a reward, d'you know, Aug?" asked Nelson.

Aug stared at his young brother—his "one best bet" for a real crushing repartee.

"Dogs'-bodies . . ." said Aug, and thought it out. "Ye-ess. A bad-tempered figure, Nelse—Twenty-Five Pounds Reward. They say she will actually pay it to whomsoever will produce evidence that will lead to a conviction of the person who killed her Peke!"

Sister Ella chimed in, acidly.

"I should never seek to charge Nelson

He leaned over the gate and levelled a thing exactly like a walking-stick, but which was evidently that vastly different thing, a walking-stick rifle.

with an embarrassing surplus of brains," she declared. "But fair is fair—and if there really is a number of rewards being offered for these canine murders, then, if I were Nelson, I should at least endeavour to give that lumbering red dog of his an opportunity of earning his keep!"

It was, for Ella, a friendly hint, though late.

Nelson had already decided to circle around the problem. Lady Downsmore's reward of twenty-five pounds, plus that one of Mrs. Morehouse, five pounds, and a third offered by a Miss Tollemache, ten pounds, made a very handsome total of forty pounds.

II.

A GOOD deal of thought, much inquiry, and a lot of hard walking during the next week, at last produced an idea—sketchy, but worth trying.

This idea brought Nelson and Red one afternoon at about two o'clock to the green-painted gate of a carriage-drive that opened on to a delightful lane, some two miles out of Chiddenham village.

Nelson and Red hovered for awhile about this gate—the carriage entrance to the house of Miss Pallis, a new-comer to the neighbourhood.

Presently Nelson kicked it, and almost instantly the noisiest little Peke in the South of England came galloping furiously down the drive, most vociferously ferocious.

It was a good house-dog, in its way.

It danced about at them, and called them accursed. It said "Yap!" at them almost unceasingly.

It seemed to be divided in its mind about Nelson and Red and the gate-posts. It seemed to be labouring under the delusion that Nelson and Red had done something injurious to the gate-posts, and were liable to do it again if not severely warned off.

It was, in fact. a very good, a very honest, and very pretty little Peke dog—though somewhat over-vocal.

Certainly it, or something to do with it, urged Nelson Chiddenham and his red animal into a species of ambush opposite the gate, where they crouched for what seemed to be a long, a very long, time.

In the end the Peke wearied of his maledictions, and went back to the house at the end of the drive.

For three days in succession Nelson Chiddenham and his dog Red Sleuth did this.

And on the third day, at about two o'clock, just before the Peke returned to the house after its usual greetings to Nelson, a person arrived at the green gate who seemed to be possessed of the unclean spirits of Impatience and Intolerance.

For he leaned over the gate, having glanced about him, and, aiming with very great care, he brought to bear upon the thoroughly annoyed Peke a thing exactly like a walking-stick, but which was evidently that vastly different thing, a walking-stick rifle—for it said in an irascible sort of way, "*Pha-uff!*"

The Peke gave a galvanic leap, fell on its side, and then was completely still, and very silent—for it had a hole through it that would have shocked the inventor of holes himself.

The killer leaned over the gate, smiled, and passed on, muttering to himself. He was a tall, good-looking man, nearing middle-age, well dressed in a country-life sort of way.

From their covert Nelson and Co. saw that he was trying to unscrew something from the end of his lethal walking-stick—and failing, for he stopped and bent, laid it over his knee and twisted. Evidently his hand slipped. They heard him swear angrily. Then he took a glove from his pocket and gripped again, failed again, and with a furious oath flung all into the ditch. He strode on, then suddenly turned back, retrieved the walking-stick, and went away.

Nelson Rodney Drake Chiddenham's numerous reddish hairs slowly sank from the strictly vertical position which they had assumed.

"D'you know who that was, Red? That was Captain Kennedy—Captain Ken, as they call him. Captain Kennedy—a friend of Sir Milner's and a friend of father's, and the ve-ry best shot at high pheasants or driven grouse that ever I saw—or father or Sir Milner either. They said so, Red. He was up at Sir Milner's in Scotland when we were—and you've retrieved his birds—*you* have, Red!"

The boy's face was white—it would have been frightened if Nelson had been an easily frightened youth.

"No need to pick up that glove and track him home, Red," he said, presently. "And yet——"

He pressed the bloodhound-setter slightly, and they flattened themselves as a lady came down the drive rather quickly.

She walked straight to the dead Peke, picked it up, examined it, found the bullet hole, and put the poor little beast gently down on the turf at the roadside.

She came out from the drive and looked up and down the lane. Nelson had never seen her before—but he judged her to be the new owner of the house, Miss Pallis.

He thought her face would have been one of the loveliest he had ever seen if it had not been so thin and so sad. She was graceful, too, he thought, tall and slender, though not

very young. Very fair, but her hair was nearer silver than gold—though, indeed, there was something of wasted gold about it, too.

Nelson Chiddenham was not a connoisseur of beauty, but he was quite ready to adore this slim, pale lady.

He lay close in his covert with his familiar, the cross-bred bloodhound, until she had picked up the Peke, walked up the drive, and passed out of sight.

III.

NELSON thought for a moment, then emerged, picked up the glove, and laid Red on the dog destroyer's trail. It was not in the least necessary, but it was an opportunity for a little useful practice, and these were not so frequent that Nelson cared to throw one away.

There was no difficulty about it. They went down the lane, which a little distance farther on continued straight across the main road. They followed it—and rather unexpectedly ran into August, his motor-bike, and a pretty girl. August, who should have been at a land-agent's office in the town, looked for a moment disconcerted, then angry, as Nelson raised his cap and limped past after Red.

"Doing a little with the Hound of the Baskervilles, I see," gibed August, pleasantly.

But Nelson was gone.

The lane ran out on to the wide downs. Far across the sheep-cropped, undulating downland moved a man. He was walking briskly towards a distant house—lonely, but beautifully situated, a big place. This was Hartsford Hall—Captain Kennedy's home.

Nelson checked Red and followed on without haste.

Twenty minutes later they were walking up the drive to the Hall—not quickly, for Nelson was just a trifle dubious about what he was going to do, or say.

He was a great admirer of Captain Kennedy—a man with a fine War record, Squire Chiddenham had once said, a first-class shot, a splendid horseman, with a quietly genial manner. He was popularly known as Captain Ken, and, as Nelson knew, was a great admirer of dogs—indeed, he specialized in harlequin Great Danes, huge pied monsters, a dozen or more of which were always haunting about Hartsford Hall.

"If I hadn't seen him shoot that Peke, Red—seen him with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it," declared Nelson. "It's going to be awkward, but—well"—he concluded a little desperately—"it can't go on. He'll be caught one day—and there'll be an awful scandal!"

He went on, puzzling as he went.

Five monstrous pied dogs, almost as big as donkeys, strolled majestically up and looked them over.

Nelson and Red went on, escorted by the pied gentlemen—perfectly quiet, well-trained dogs, but not by any means the type of canine to pick a quarrel with.

Captain Ken, in the hall, saw them coming and strolled out to the big porch to meet them. His face was whitish and, Nelson thought, a little strained-looking. For a moment the Captain stared absently at Nelson and his dog, almost as if he failed to recognize them. Then he smiled.

"Why, hullo, Nelson Chiddenham—what are you up to out here—trying to pinch some of my dogs? Come in and have some lemonade or something. Still got Red Whatchacallim, I see. Good as ever, I suppose?"

He steered Nelson and Red into the house.

Five Great Danes followed to the threshold, halted there, and looked inquiringly at the Captain, who shook his head. There were five full-sized sighs, and they all walked back to the shade under a big lawn beech from which they had first issued.

"Awfully well-behaved dogs, sir," said Nelson, interested.

"Oh, well, they naturally do as they're told. Any disobedient dog gives me the horrors—but a disobedient Great Dane would give me the howling St. Vitus's dance—whatever that may be. Sit down, old chap! How came you to be this way?"

Nelson flushed.

"Well, I——" He hesitated, then put the glove on the table.

"I found this glove," he said. "And I thought I'd better return it at once, sir!"

The Captain looked steadily at the crumpled leather glove. An extraordinary expression dawned slowly on his face.

"This—this glove, eh?" he said after a pause. Nelson saw that his hands were clenched so tightly that the knuckles were white.

"How d'ye know that's my glove, Nelson?" he asked presently. "It might ——"

An enormous Great Dane scratched lightly at the big bay window from outside—evidently an old favourite—and the Captain wheeled with a reproof so violent and harsh that it was ferocious.

The great dog faded from the window as if the Captain had lashed it across the eyes with a heavy whip. Nelson was startled at that—but he was rather glad about it a little later.

"This glove, Nelson—how d'you know it's mine?"

Nelson stiffened himself—and faced it.

"I saw you drop it—about an hour ago," he said as coolly as he could, though there was just a suggestion of gasp about it!

The Captain went to a sideboard and with extraordinary swiftness poured and drank a stiff whisky-and-soda.

"Where?" he demanded sharply.

"In the lane," said Nelson simply.

The Captain's face was the colour of bone. But a strange and rather scaring glow was lighting itself in his eyes.

"In the lane—what lane—where?"

"Just outside the green gate," said Nelson curtly—not because he felt curt, but because he felt quite a little scared and couldn't show it.

"I see—I see. Thanks, Nelson—thanks! I—think I like your style, Nelson, old man. . . ." The Captain strode up and down a few times. It would not have strained the perception of a child to understand that he was, for some reason, fighting desperately for self-control.

"Did anyone see you, my boy?"

Captain Ken rushed at him, dangerously — and the man slid a clean, crisp, extraordinarily fast punch to his employer's jaw.

"No, sir. I picked it up and came after you."

The Captain gripped Nelson's shoulder.

"You're a good chap, young Nelson. I wish a chap like you were a few years older. Bayliss told me you were a little sportsman in spite of your game leg and your glasses and things——"

He broke off and sat down at the table, staring at Nelson with eyes that shone like grey-blue water with a wintry sun on it.

"Let's understand each other, Nelson," he said, and drummed softly on the shining surface of the table with his fist. "You saw me throw away the glove?"

"Yes—when the silencer wouldn't unscrew," said Nelson—so that the Captain should understand that he had seen everything.

"You mean that you saw me shoot that yapping Chinese insect?"

"Yes, Captain Kennedy, I did!"

Nelson saw Red's hackles rise like the

spines of the alleged-to-be-fretful porcupine, as the Captain's fist crashed on the table like the blow of a hammer.

"*Not* Captain Kennedy! Captain *Insecticide!* Insect-killer! Weed-killer! That's my name—*Insecticide!* I kill the little vermin like flies—like wasps—like beetles, Nelson! A man's got a right to kill vermin, hasn't he? A doctor's got a right to kill microbes—bacteria—whatever the bugs are called, hasn't he?"

The Captain was shouting now.

NELSON, with one eye, saw a surge of Great Danes, roused by the Captain's voice, weaving about the big window like a pack of gigantic foxhounds. But they did not touch the glass, for they had been rigorously well-trained.

"I kill 'em, Nelson, when I get a good chance. Kill 'em! *Hey!* Why not? Y'see, the little vermin killed the only being on this green earth that ever meant anything to me! Killed her! Contagion—infection—what's the word? She used to kiss the little devils—when I hadn't the pluck to ask her to kiss me because I respected her as if she were a goddess! She was the loveliest girl in the world, so trim and sweet and slim and graceful and so kind—the very kindest of all. Only she loved these lap devils—used to kiss them and fondle them—and send them all out for a romp and scramble. It was pretty enough—but you understand dogs and so do I—and you know, as I know, that a dog is first of all a dog. And dogs were not designed for drawing-room pets, to be kissed and fondled!"

He was talking very fast and violently, beating his left fist in the palm of his right hand savagely.

"It's natural for a dog when he's out of doors to go nosing and prying and poking about. Half their senses are in their noses. *Her* dogs used to go scampering about—very pretty and all that—but just as dirty, from a sane, human point of view, as any other dog!"

His brows were knotted and every few seconds he shut his eyes tightly for the length of a few sentences. He was like a man in intense pain.

"Even now—at this very minute, Nelson—there are scores of pretty, dainty, sweet women kissing little dogs that have come straight from some ash-can, some garbage or other, my God! *They*—the women—don't know. At least, they won't think. Nelson, one or other of those dogs killed my girl—some foul infection! How *can* a woman with some trivial abrasion—some minute scratch on her pretty lip or chin—kiss a dog! *Kiss* a dog, my God—when she would shrink squealing from some tramp fresh from even a workhouse bath. Give me the tramp. I love dogs, Nelson—I always have—but *as* dogs. Look at my Great Danes—gentlemen—ladies!—all of 'em! But kiss 'em! *I?* Would *you?* These little silky tykes—good little devils if they were well-schooled—get spoiled, and when they aren't watched are just as nasty as any other unwatched dog. Is that a lie—or is it the stark-naked truth, Nelson?"

The Captain paused, staring hard at Nelson. But he could only have seen him through a mist, for now tears, great wrung-out tears, were rolling down his stone-white face.

"Yes, it's true!" said Nelson, honestly, for he knew it was true.

Captain Ken's voice leaped up again.

"That's why I kill 'em. I left my girl and went to France with her promise to marry me when I came back—on my first leave—and one of the toy dogs killed her dead before I could get home! That's why I kill 'em!"

His voice was suddenly a shout, his eyes glared.

"I've killed scores—I'll kill hundreds—thousands—I've got the money to pay for 'em—and I can shoot——"

He was almost screaming now—and outside the perturbed and excited Great Danes were baying furiously—glaring in; and every single hair on Red's back was bristling—and Nelson was scared stiff, but dared not show it. The Captain was mad—he understood now—mad on this subject, at least—sane about everything else.

"Kill 'em—*kill* 'em, I say——" shouted Captain Ken—and wheeled ferociously as the door opened and a burly man, very light on his feet, stepped in.

"Why, sir—I——"

"Get out of it, Lake! Who gave you leave to butt in here? Get out or I'll——"

The Captain rushed at him, dangerously—and the man, Lake, slid a clean, crisp, extraordinarily fast punch to his employer's jaw that laid Captain Ken on the floor, all but unconscious.

The man turned to Nelson, his rugged face working.

"An' that's what I'm paid to do, sir!" he said, apologetically. "Every now and then—to the Captain—the man who saved my life twice over there—under the machine-guns. If you don't mind my saying so, you'd better leave him, sir!"

He knelt down by Captain Ken, speaking quietly, soothingly, like a woman picking up a child that has fallen on the sharp gravel path. He was evidently a sort of valet-attendant.

Nelson got up.

"*Heel,* Red!" he said mechanically, and went out.

The Great Danes were not pleased with him, and said so.

But Nelson was not afraid of dogs, and the dogs knew it, as dogs do. Moreover, Nelson had something else to worry about. He went limping miserably homewards across the downs.

"Captain Ken! Who ever would have thought that he went about with this trouble always—always—kind of gnawing at him," said Nelson as he went, feeling wholly helpless about it.

Over an undulation of the downs a first-rate light hunter came cantering, ridden by the slender lady Nelson had seen at the green gate in the lane.

She reined in as she approached and asked Nelson if she were on the right track to Hartsford Hall—Captain Kennedy's house.

Nelson said "yes"—but he never quite understood why he added that Captain Kennedy was not well that afternoon. He saw her face, more beautiful than ever from the pink flush which the riding had given it, suddenly blanch and her wide eyes darken.

"*Ill!*"

Nelson made haste to reassure her. He explained that he had just left the Captain, who was not exactly ill but was a little upset about something.

"Was it serious, do you know?" She seemed extraordinarily anxious.

"No——" said Nelson. "Something about one of the dogs." He hazarded that probably everything would be all right in the morning.

She looked very searchingly indeed at Nelson—far too penetratingly for one's comfort.

"You are a friend of Captain Kennedy?" she asked.

Nelson claimed to be that, and they exchanged names and, so to put it, addresses.

She seemed to hesitate, to hang, as it were, undecided. Her horse moved about fretfully, and she dismounted.

"Tell me, Nelson—you don't mind my calling you Nelson?—is the Captain upset about one of his own great dogs (I have heard of them) or about some other dog—a—for instance—a toy dog—a dead Pekingese? Do you know that?"

Nelson hesitated in his turn. He could see that this lady was no enemy of the Captain, and so he fell back on the truth—the good, old, unpleasant but oddly reliable truth.

"Yes, Miss Pallis. It's about a dead Peke," he said. Her blue eyes pierced him.

"A Peke that—that died near the gates of my house in Grove Lane this afternoon?" she asked.

Nelson must have been inspired, for he nodded.

One hand on the bridle rein of her horse, she drew near, and the other hand Nelson suddenly felt, light as a flower, on his shoulder.

"Captain Kennedy is a dear friend of mine, Nelson," she said, "and I want to help him. Don't you? Let's exchange confidences, Nelson."

Her voice was the voice of a siren, but the music of her voice would not have helped her if Nelson had not sensed that she was very much indeed what she claimed to be—a friend of Captain Ken's.

They exchanged confidences — at such length that it was nearing tea-time when presently Nelson, with his red shadow at his heel, went limping across the main road on the short cut home.

A motor horn sounded and a battered old Ford shook its ancient bones round the corner. It was the Chiddenham "sedan," driven by the Squire—Nelson's silent father.

IV.

THE "sedan" stopped with a squeal and a squirm as the Squire saw his youngest—and, secretly, his favourite—son. Squire Chiddenham was running across to have a chat with Sir Milner Bayliss, the insurance millionaire, an old crony of the Squire and a great friend of Nelson. His grey eyes soaked up Nelson.

"Anything wrong, Nelson? You look—worried.'

"Yes, sir. I've had a queerish thing happen."

The Squire glanced at his watch.

"Well, well, hop up and tell me as we go."

So Nelson and Red "hopped up," and long before he had confided fully in his father they had rattled up to Longwater Hall.

"Better come in with me and we'll get Sir Milner into consultation—three heads are better than two," said the Squire.

So it was in the presence of his father and the childless man who wished he were his father that Nelson presently ended his tale—tremendously glad and relieved that great good luck had ordained things so.

"Hum!" said Sir Milner at the end, eyeing Nelson under grey, shaggy brows. "It's a queer story, my boy—hey, Chiddenham? Captain Ken of all men—God bless my soul, what a tragic thing! What were you planning to do about it, Nelson?"

"Well, sir, I don't know—quite. I wondered on the way home if Captain Ken had quite got hold of the truth—about that lap-dog in the first place," said he, diffidently.

"Well?"

"You see, I know, of course, that ladies do—well, kiss and fondle dogs that are not really broke——"

"Dirty little dogs, in fact!" suggested Sir Milner, dryly.

"Well, sometimes, sir. But all the same, I've never heard of a diseased or dirty dog killing anybody," declared Nelson. "After all, sir, he may be wrong."

"It's more of a question for a doctor, that," suggested the Squire.

Nelson seized on that.

"Yes, father—that's exactly it. That's what I thought. And I was thinking that if somebody went and called on the doctor that attended the lady who died, and explained the trouble with Captain Ken—how he isn't to be trusted about lap-dogs—perhaps the doctor might be able to do something to help him."

Both men nodded, deeply interested.

"He might be able to prove that the poor girl died of something which had nothing at all to do with contagion or infection from one of her toy dogs—that's what you mean, hey, Nelson? Well, that's a good idea—very sound—very well thought out, don't you agree, Chiddenham?" boomed Sir Milner.

The Squire nodded.

"D'ye know the doctor's address?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Nelson. "Miss Pallis, who is a cousin of Miss Seymore, the girl who died, told me the village she lived in"—he named it, a place some fifteen miles away—"and if the doctor there is the same, he would be the one who attended her."

Sir Milner agreed.

"Yes, that should be so, Nelson."

He touched a bell.

"And, if your father is willing, I think it would be about the best thing possible if I let Chater run you over there to have a chat with that doctor and hear what he has to say. Have something to eat here first, then nip over, see what you make of it—tell him your story just as you've told us—and then come back here and have a bite of dinner, and let us know just how you got on. Hey, Chiddenham—what d'ye think?"

THE SQUIRE did not make haste to answer. He had seen Nelson flinch a little—and he was not quite sure if the boy was equal to the task.

"Let the boy go, Chiddenham. We all have to begin to learn about life some time or other," said Sir Milner.

The Squire shrugged.

"All right. Do the best you can, Nelson. Tell your story——"

"In your own way, mind," interposed Sir Milner, hastily. "Just as you've told us."

A few minutes later Master Nelson Rodney Drake Chiddenham was sitting curled up in a corner of the huge Rolls limousine *en route* to the village in which Miss Seymore had lived—and died.

There was no difficulty about finding the doctor—a tall, gaunt man of sixty, of rather severe aspect, but with a twinkle never very far from his eyes and a wide mouth that smiled quite readily. His name was Forbes. He was just entering his house as the great silver-grey car rolled up and Nelson emerged.

Nelson raised his cap and introduced himself.

"Chiddenham—Chiddenham!" mused the doctor. "I know your father—I met him some years ago at a shooting party at Longwater Hall. Come in! Nothing much wrong with you, I should think."

His keen eyes flickered over the iron cage embracing Nelson's leg.

"I'm just having some tea—you'd better have a cup with me. Is that your father's car?"

"No, sir. It belongs to Sir Milner Bayliss. He sent me over in it."

So they went indoors. Nelson found it quite simple to tell his story to the doctor, for he proved to be an easy man to tell things to. He listened carefully and rarely interrupted.

He asked a few questions at the end, then sat thinking for a few moments. He got up and went to a sort of bookcase and brought out an oldish, well-worn book, rather like a thick diary. He pored in silence over an entry in this book for a time, his face serious.

"Yes, yes—poor girl. Remember the case perfectly," he said to himself, and closed the book. "Humph!"

He thrust out his lower lip and studied Nelson with absent eyes.

"All this—all this is very unprofessional, Nelson. Yes. But desperate cases—desperate remedies, eh? Perhaps not so desperate after all. More tea, Nelson? No. Then just hang on here for a few minutes, will you? I have one or two things to see to, and then I think I will run over and see Captain Kennedy—in my private capacity, of course."

He went out.

A quarter of an hour later the Rolls was suavely conveying them back to Sir Milner's.

"You seem to know a pretty good deal about dogs, Nelson," said Dr. Forbes presently. "Did *you* ever hear of a case where a toy dog—or a cat—infected its owner—fatally?"

"No, sir," said Nelson, flatly, accustomed as he was to unkissed dogs.

The doctor lit, with the care of a man who cannot afford to spoil it, a cigar.

"Miss Pallis——" he said presently. "As I remember her, she was very much like Miss Seymore——"

He thought for a while in a cigarry silence.

"I suppose it would be entirely feasible if we diverted this rather sumptuous vehicle sufficiently out of its course to enable us to call on Miss Pallis before we settle down on Sir Milner?" he said at last.

"Yes, sir," said Nelson, blithely enough.

The hard-working country practitioner spared an odd glance out of an eye-corner at the shabby boy who so casually and unconsciously directed the voyage of a machine almost as expensive—so to put it—as a small torpedo-boat.

Another cigar-flavoured pause. Then the doctor said:—

"What's wrong with your leg, my boy? Does it hurt?"

"Captain Kennedy is a dear friend of mine," she said, "and I want to help him. Don't you? Let's exchange confidences, Nelson."

The leg kept them comfortably conversational till the car ran in through the green gate of Miss Pallis, and slid silkily to a standstill opposite her front door.

There the doctor left Nelson to himself.

V.

PRESENTLY the front door opened and the doctor stepped in again. He was followed by Miss Pallis.

"Ah, Nelson—is that *you?*" she said in a voice that made him want to go out and, for her sake, invite Red to bite a large piece out of some villain somewhere. Only the parish was short of villains.

The car was further diverted—by the curiously authoritative voice of the old doctor—to Hartsford Hall.

It was a long wait there—very long.

Yet, in the end, three people appeared—the doctor, Miss Pallis, and Captain Ken.

It seemed a little odd to Nelson that the Captain saw Miss Pallis into the car without a word—without one word. As for himself—he might have been a speck of dust in one of the broad brake drums of the car for all the notice Captain Ken took of him.

Yet he was curiously content as the car rolled away. He seemed to sense that the Captain could not have spoken without tears. He had looked like a greatly shaken man.

It was fairly obvious in the well-lighted back of the car that Miss Pallis had been crying. But, unless they must, wise folk don't notice when ladies cry—though they are most observant when ladies laugh. It was the doctor who broke the silence.

"Well, so ends a perfectly understandable misapprehension," he said.

"Yes," said Miss Pallis rather faintly. But her eyes shone.

She said nothing more till the car was at her house. Then she shook hands with the doctor—and suddenly leaned towards Nelson.

"Good night, Nelson," she said. Her hair was like silver and gold intermingled in the subdued light, and her eyes were like jewels set in dark shadows. "I am so glad I met you on the downs—so grateful!"

Except for his mother's, Nelson had never known a woman's arms about him before.

The doctor coughed dryly as the car encircled the oval of turf and turned homewards.

"Ladies," he said, "are apt to be a little demonstrative, Nelson. Otherwise all's well. It was an odd delusion, that of Captain Kennedy's. Miss Seymore died of a form of erysipelas. Nothing to do with the dogs—nothing at all."

Only a practitioner of his own quality would have known that he uttered the thing which was not.

"I was able to convince Captain Kennedy of that—in the end."

Nelson thought.

"But wherever did he get the idea from—first of all, I mean, sir?" he asked.

The doctor laughed—one of those reassuring laughs that doctors use.

"Why, from the idle, foolish burblings of an old gamekeeper of the Seymores. An old boy—dead years ago—who hated everything except a steady retriever. *He* said—that poor old ignoramus—to Captain Kennedy that in his opinion Miss Seymore had been infected and killed by lap-dogs! And that, magnified by war-wrecked nerves, war-strained mentality, wounds, and shell-shock, sowed a dangerous seed in the Captain's brain, Nelson! You saw the fruit of that seed."

Nelson thought again.

"Yes . . . but Miss Pallis, sir? I can't see how she——"

The doctor laughed quietly.

"No? No. It just happened that she was always rather fond of the Captain. And she bought a place near the place he had inherited—to be near him, you see, Nelson. She had a companion—and the companion had a rather noisy Peke which attracted the lethal attention of the Captain. In a way it was all pure chance—coincidence, if you like the word better. And in a way it was the mercy of God.

"To-night—back there—Miss Pallis came to the Captain like the lovely phantom of the poor girl who, many years ago, might have been his bride! He—she—they were both grateful, I think, to come together again. You see, Miss Pallis and Captain Kennedy were very close friends indeed—until Miss Seymore came home, met him, and swept him off his feet. And also Miss Pallis is extremely like her cousin—not quite so lovely, perhaps, say a very sweet echo of that most beautiful girl who died. But the Captain, after all, is only an echo—so to put it—of the man he used to be. . . . That is, in a way, good. Miss Pallis has always loved him. That is really why, when she heard that he had returned to England—he went abroad when Miss Seymore died, ten years ago—and had settled down here, she, too, came here to live—to renew, if possible, that old friendship. They will comfort each other, those two, my boy."

The old doctor chuckled.

"Not such cold comfort either—they are still comparatively young, well-off, and I think the lap-dog complex will soon be exorcised—if it isn't already! Not so bad, Nelson. All will be well with them!"

Before Nelson had quite made up his mind what "exorcised" meant the car

stopped and his father and Sir Milner appeared in the great hall.

VI.

THE doctor, an old acquaintance of Sir Milner and the Squire, may have been just a little "unprofessional" during the story he told them at dinner, but one forgives that when the last words are "So, you see, all will be well with them."

Then Nelson was called upon to give again his version of the matter, which he did, not without embarrassment.

Sir Milner eyed him.

"So, really, you set out with old Red to track down those rewards, hey, Nelson?" he asked.

"Well, yes, sir," admitted Nelson, a little fiery in the face, and added hastily and rather emphatically that he would not dream of attempting to collect them now.

"Of course not. It's just a bit of bad luck, Nelson. But that's the way of the world—the way of the world, my boy. Never mind—one has to take the thick with the thin. And you've helped make those two folk happy—a good chap like Captain Ken, a charming lady like Miss Pallis. That's something. Satisfied?"

"Yes, sir," said Nelson and meant it.

He and Red went home with the Squire in the ancient "sedan."

"Tired, Nelson?" asked his father, half-way home.

"No, father."

"Good. You did very well about all that, Nelson. He's a good chap, Captain Ken. It would have been a great pity to have had a scandal. You weren't upset at losing those rewards?"

"No, sir—not a bit. I—I like Captain Ken and Miss Pallis."

"Good," said the Squire, and honked the old sedan into their drive.

"Hah!" said Aug humorously as Nelson entered unto the family. "And what might our Mister Sherlock Holmes have achieved during this long session with the Hound of the Bustervilles?"

(Fair Aug, having just failed to borrow "ten modest bob" from sister Ella, the family miser, was a little annoyed at life.)

Nelson grinned.

"Nothing, Aug," he said, cheerfully enough.

Aug affected extreme astonishment.

"What—*no* rewards! The old blood-hound must be losing his olfactory genius!"

The Squire entered. He had heard Aug and he was smiling one of his rather rare smiles.

"Oh, about those rewards, Nelson," he said before the whole family, and took a cluster of bank-notes from his pocket. "Sir Milner insisted on making an arrangement about those, and he is himself adjusting things with—with—the right man—later. He insisted. Let me see now—Lady Downsmore offered twenty-five pounds, didn't she?"

Slowly he put down on the table one by one five most attractive five-pound notes.

"Lady Downsmore's reward!" he said.

The family gaped. He added a fiver.

"Mrs. Morehouse's reward."

Aug gasped. His father added yet two more fivers.

"Miss Tollemache's reward. That correct, Nelson? Count the money."

Nelson counted eight five-pound notes.

"That's right, sir," he gulped.

"Well, it's yours, my boy—well-earned," said his father, took a quick glance at him, and went on.

"Sir Milner will arrange with those ladies and—our other friend! Also——"

The Squire produced ten more of those fivers. Aug reeled.

"He says that the pet-dogs of those ladies must be replaced. And as he considers that you know more about dogs than anybody in the district he wants you to find three Pekes, or whatever they are that please the ladies. They are to take their pick. *You* are to find 'em. If you can buy them for less than fifty pounds you can keep the difference. If you can't—Sir Milner said—then you aren't the boy he thought you were!"

The Squire pushed over the notes and left Nelson—and all—staring at forty pounds of Nelson's money. . . . maybe more.

The long, low, liquid whistle of the totally be-staggered Aug fluted like the far cry of a hungry gull through the big room. Nelson looked at his father, serious and quiet, opposite him, and, for no reason that he understood, something seemed to swell in his heart and his throat—something that threatened either suffocation or a dreadful, shameful spate of tears.

Half blindly, he pushed the pile of notes towards his mother and, muttering something almost unintelligible about supper for Red, limped hurriedly out of the room.

There was an odd pause, broken by the voice of the Squire—the voice that meant strict business.

"And if anybody here tries to cadge any of that money from Nelson and I hear of it, there will be trouble!"

But the genial August "touched" quite successfully for what he called a couple of "half-bars," viz., one pound, behind the stable three days later. And the Squire never heard of that for even Aug had a sort of dim idea that he could trust young Nelse to that extent.

A SWEEPSTAKE

By LYNN DOYLE

THE whole trouble started with Mr. Barrington of the Bank givin' a card party the night wee Mr. Anthony, the solicitor, was dinin' with the District Inspector of the police.

Mr. Anthony an' Mr. Barrington were both reasonably young bachelors at the time, an' both went to lodge with a Mrs. Shanks, a respectable wee widow with a thirsty son. Mr. Anthony had the dinin'-room from her, an' Mr. Barrington the sittin'-room upstairs; but the pair of them bein' good friends, they clubbed rooms, an' ate together in the dinin'-room an' sat together in the sittin'-room. To save trouble an' expense, they shared the same meals, an' went halves in the cost. But a man's atin' depends on himself, an' his drinkin' depends on his friends; an' they thought it better for each man to have his own whiskey-bottle.

The night of Mr. Barrington's party Jim Cochrane, the vet, was in bad luck; but, as Mr. Barrington said afterwards, if he lost on the cards he won on the whiskey; for to drown his sorrows he drank as much as the other four put together, with the result that Mr. Barrington's bottle ran dry.

This was awkward; for, though it was far too soon to give up their game, it was after ten o'clock, the closin' hour for the pubs in them days. A kind of a depression fell on the party as they eyed the empty bottle; an' Mr. Barrington b.gán to feel very small, although he couldn't fairly be blamed for Jim Cochrane's drouth.

All at once he had a great idea.

"Boys," he sez, "Mr. Anthony has half a bottle in the sideboard. We'll drink that, an' I'll restore it to him to-morrow. He'll want no drink, comin' from the D.I.'s house, I know."

Mr. Anthony's half-bottle went the way of the rest; and about twelve o'clock they were playin' the last hand before they'd go home, when they heard the hall-door open.

"That'll be Anthony," sez Mr. Barrington. "Play your card, Jim."

But Jim Cochrane held his hand, an' still listened; an' a kind of an uneasy silence fell on the crowd. The next thing they heard was Mr. Anthony's voice:—

"Come in, Tom, an' have a deoch-an-doris. I can give you a drop of the best whiskey in Ireland."

With that, Mr. Anthony skips into the room, salutes everybody very friendly, an' goes over to the sideboard. He lifted out his bottle, looked at it, an' held it up to the light. Oh, divil a squig! As Jim Cochrane told me afterwards, if Mr. Anthony had took out the cork he didn't think he'd have found even a memory.

Everybody expected an explosion; but

ILLUSTRATED BY ILLINGWORTH

Mr. Anthony never said one syllable, but put the bottle back, closed the sideboard door very carefully, an' walked out of the room. The card-party finished very soon after, an' though there was an attempt at laughin' at Mr. Anthony's misfortune, an' some half-hearted chaff about him takin' the matter to the Courts, the boys went down Mrs. Shanks's steps with their tails very much between their legs.

MR. BARRINGTON an' me was sittin' in the private bar of Michael Cassidy's pub when he told me this story; an' when he got so far he stopped an' began to laugh.

"Would you believe me, Pat," sez he, "but ever since that evenin' the suspicious wee rascal has been hidin' his whiskey-bottle! Wait though——" he pulled out his watch—"he should be finished anytime now, an' he'll be in here presently—for his afternoon tea," sez he, grinnin'—"an' I'll make him admit it in the presence of a witness."

As he spoke the words round the door comes Mr. Anthony, eye-glass an' all, as cocky as usual.

"Certainly I'm hidin' my whiskey," sez he, "an' why wouldn't I, Barrington? Blast it, I'm a solicitor, not a spigot. I hope I'm not wanting in hospitality. None of the Anthonys ever were, so far as I know. On the rare occasions when the best solicitor in Ulster does get his fingers on six-an'-eightpence he doesn't mind spending six shillings of it entertaining his friends; but when the last eightpence of it is taken out of his pocket without his leave, he draws the line; damme, he draws the line."

"I never took your blooming whiskey but once," sez Mr. Barrington, leppin' to his feet as red as a turkey-cock.

"You'll pardon me, Barrington," sez Mr. Anthony, very cool an' composed. "Your honour is not in question; but your memory is bad. I am a methodical man, as you know. I can tell—damme," sez he, "I can tell to the blinding of a midge's eye at any time how much I've taken out of my bottle——"

"Up to about your fifth glass, that is," put in Mr. Barrington.

"D——n the fifth glass," sez Mr. Anthony, leppin' up very red in his turn, "I never had five glasses at one time in my life. Listen, Barrington: On Tuesday fortnight you drank out of my bottle from the upper edge of the label to the top of the word 'whiskey.' Three days after that you drank down to the bottom of the 'y.' And last Wednesday night you and your friends finished half a bottle on me. You didn't forget about that, I know. But, dammit," sez he, "nobody short of a dipsomaniac could forget half-a-bottle of whiskey. But the other two drinks went clean out of your mind. So I hid my whiskey. I hid it where you nor no other man'll ever find it," sez he, swellin' himself out. "Blast it," sez he, "I've hid it that well that there's times I can hardly find it myself."

"You hid it in the chimney," sez Mr. Barrington, givin' another of his easy-goin' grins, "on the left-hand side of the breast-work of brick that goes round the inside of the chimney."

Mr. Anthony's jaw fell about a foot, an' he looked very foolish.

"How did you find out?" sez he. "If your bed was in the same room as mine I'd say I must have been talkin' in my sleep."

"You came up after dinner, the other night," sez Mr. Barrington, "with the smell of whiskey on you very strong, an' soot on the knuckles of your right hand. So I looked an' found your bottle An' now my bottle is sittin' on the same breastwork," sez he, "only on the right-hand side. More than that," he goes on, "there's a dose in my bottle that the chemist prepared for me; an' if a certain person finds the bottle, as he's sure to do from the stupid way you go on, Anthony——" (Mr. Anthony opened his mouth here, but shut it again on second thoughts) "he'll get the surprise of his young life. It was the landlady's son that lowered the tide for you, Anthony," sez he, "an' not me at all. But I fancy this little mixture of mine'll help *his* memory."

"You're a stupid fool," sez Mr. Anthony, takin' no notice of the dig; "an' before all's over you'll find yourself in the dock. Why didn't you consult a solicitor, especially when you could have got one for nothin'? If this mixture is harmful you may be indicted for manslaughter."

"Ah, blethers," sez Mr. Barrington. "It'll give the young fellow a gripe that'll make him think he's taken strychnine, that's all——"

"Listen, Barrington," sez Mr. Anthony, very serious. "Listen to a man that everybody in this town knows doesn't give bad advice. Away an' look after that bottle of yours."

But at this point I broke in.

"You'd better away an' look after your own, Mr. Anthony," sez I "Big Billy Lenahan was standin' near the door when you admitted where your whiskey-bottle was hid. I misdoubted at the time that he was closer nor was wholesome; an' I misdoubt it far more now, because I see him rollin' his big carcase up towards your lodgin's at the rate of about ten mile an hour."

But with all his vanity an' capers, Mr. Anthony was always the wee gentleman.

"Run like blazes, Barrington," sez he. "If he didn't hear clearly, an' mistakes the side of the chimney, that big rascal is the very man to roast you for about five hundred pounds."

Away the two of them went, an' me with them; for I wasn't goin' to miss the fun. When we got to the lower end of the street Mrs. Shanks's house is in we could see Billy on the top of the steps up to the door talkin' to Mrs. Shanks herself. He turned an' looked down the street, but I knew he couldn't have seen us, for he went in after Mrs. Shanks an' closed the door.

"Quick march," sez Mr. Anthony in a very military voice all at once. "I'm in command here," an' away the three of us goes, heel an' toe.

But it was a long street, an' uphill all the way; an' we were too late. Mrs. Shanks was at the door the minit the knocker struck it, all upset-lookin'.

"Oh, Mr. Barrington," sez she. "God bless you!—A man's just come in to see you, an' he's took terrible bad in the dinin'-room. Listen," sez she. "Oh, run!"

There come a deep groan an' a crash from the dinin'-room as Mr. Barrington fumbled at the door-handle; an' when the three of us rushed in there was Billy Lenahan on the floor, rollin' from side to side, tearin' at his throat, an' groanin' somethin' lamentable to hear.

All the time I was puffin' my way up the street I'd been prayin', God forgive me, that Billy would drink from Mr. Barrington's bottle; but when I saw him squirmin' there in agony, rascal an' all as he was, I wished my prayer hadn't been answered so pat. As for Mr. Barrington, he went as white as a sheet.

Mr. Anthony was tremblin' like a leaf, himself; but all the same, he took command.

"Stand back," sez he. "I've taken out my certificate in the St. John's Ambulance. This man looks to be poisoned, Barrington," sez he, very professional.

"Oh, go to hell," shouts Mr. Barrington, pushin' him over on his back, an' droppin' on his knees beside Big Billy.

"What's wrong, Lenahan?" sez he. "Are you ill? How do you feel?"

" The pains," groans Billy. The pains —I'm on fire inside. Oh, Mr. Barrington, give me somethin'! " The whites of his eyes turned up in his head, an' the two arms of him stiffened like ramrods.

" Convulsions," sez Mr. Anthony, puttin' the eye-glass back in his face. " This looks to me like strychnine."

" Take his head, you fool," roars Mr. Barrington, near cryin'.

He dashes over to the fireplace, stoops down, an' fetches out a bottle of whiskey.

" That's *your* whiskey, you great big ass," snaps Mr. Anthony. " Give him mine."

" My heavens," sez Mr. Barrington, holdin' up his bottle, " an' he's put half of it in him. Quick, Anthony," he stutters. He pulls out the other bottle from the fireplace; an' runs over to Billy.

' A glass, Pat," sez he. " Oh, hurry, man," sez he, pluckin' the cork out with his teeth an' nearly brainin' Mr. Anthony with the back of his head—" a cup—a spoon—anythin'."

" Put the bottle to his lips, Mr. Barrington," sez I. " These mountainy men has insides like a boiler."

An' sure enough, Billy took a long pull at the whiskey an' never even coughed. He leaned back a minit, drew a deep breath, an' then put up his lips again like a pet lamb at a suckin' bottle. I could see a good deal of the sympathy leavin' Mr. Anthony's face.

" How are you now?" asks Mr. Barrington. He pulled the bottle out of Billy's mouth with a plop, sat back on his haunches, an' put the bottle down on the floor.

" Better," sez Billy, very low an' gaspin'.

There was Billy Lenahan on the floor, rollin' from side to side, tearin' at his throat, an' groanin' somethin' lamentable to hear.

He half sat-up, an' looked round the room.

" Is that you, Pat," he whispers. " How do you come to be here? Oh, Pat, I've drunk some terrible thing."

All at once he let a screech, snapped his teeth together like a rat-trap, an' lashed out with his arms an' legs. Mr. Anthony went backwards into the fireplace. As he fell the string of his eye-glass lapped round the neck of a wee china lady on the mantelpiece, an' she followed Mr. Anthony, only she didn't stay so whole. As for Mr. Barrington, one of B lly's workin' boots had took him in the waistcoat, an' by the look in his eye as he went two-double round the room he was feelin' near bad enough to drink his own whiskey.

It was all was left for him, anyway. The second convulsion Billy took, his hand encountered the whiskey bottle on the floor. He fell back; his whole body loosened in a second, teeth an' all; an' when the bottle dropped from his hand there was no whiskey spilled.

I could stand it no longer, but went over an' took him under the armpits.

" Get up, you big humbug," sez I between my teeth as I lifted at him. " There was very little the matter with you."

BIG BILLY sprachled up on his feet as I expected, now that the drink was done, an' stood there lurchin' back an' forward; an' if he wasn't sick any longer there was no man could say, in any fair play, that he was sober. Mr. Anthony was on his feet, too, lookin', very ill-pleased, at his empty bottle; an' Mr. Barrington was about half straightened-up, an' lookin', no better pleased, at Billy. But Billy got his oar in first.

" You'll rue this, Mr. Barrington," sez he, puttin' his hands in his pockets an' then takin' them out again to balance himself. " Oh, I know," sez he. " This is all because I didn't meet my wee bill at your Bank when it fell due. I have your letter, still. If I didn't attend to it you'd do somethin' that would surprise me, eh? "—I wish you'd seen the horror in Mr. Barrington's face. " But to invite me in to have a drink, an' then first—*uck!*—to poison me, an' next to pour whiskey into me that was worse than poison "—I was lookin' at Mr. Anthony's face now, an' it was worth while—" I wouldn't've believed it of a manager of the Downshire Bank. But, wait," sez Billy. " There'll be law over this. If there was a s'licitor here that knew the law about anythin' but a poor man makin'—sup of poteen," sez he, lookin' very wicked at Mr. Anthony, " I'd employ him. As it is," sez he, " I'll —*Uck!*" sez he, that unexpected that his hat fell off— go to a s'licitor that *does* know law. Misser Barrington, you'll've a lerrer from Mr. Fitzsimons, B.L.—*B.L.*," he repeats, glarin' at Mr. Anthony—" in the mornin'!"

He stooped down for his hat. As he riz he laid hold of the fancy cloth that was on the mantelpiece; an' all I can say is, the wee china lady was buried among her friends. Then he made his way out of the room, an' next minit I heard the front door tryin' if the house was jerry-built. Neither Mr. Barrington nor Mr. Anthony said one word. I went over to the window an' looked out.

" Well, thank God," sez I, " he's fell down the steps, anyway."

" That he may never get up again, for an oily big fraud!" sez Mr. Barrington, very hearty. " This'll be a dear dosin' for me if he can make it."

But there was more bounce in Mr. Anthony.

" Leave it to me, Barrington," sez he; " leave it all in my hands. You'll have a solicitor on your side, don't forget that, not a solemn-faced numskull like that fellow Fitzsimons. As for Lenahan," sez he, snappin' his fingers, " after the way he's insulted not only me but my whiskey this day, if I get him into the witness-box, damme, I'll riddle him!"

" Witness-box!" sez Mr. Barrington. " Sure you know that a man in a Bank can't let this go to witness-boxes. What in the name of heavens is that!" sez he, as there came a most blood-curdlin' yell from upstairs. " This is more of Lenahan," sez he. " He must have come back. By the holy poker, I'll be hanged for him."

The three of us ran out into the hall, an' there on the first landin' was a chimley-sweep with his brushes in one hand, an' him holdin' a bag of soot on his shoulder with the other; an' the groans Billy Lenahan had let out of him was nothin' to the gowls of the sweep.

By this time Mr. Barrington was near astray in his mind.

" What's wrong with *you*, you fool?" he roars up at the sweep. " Do you hear me? What's *wrong* with you? Oh, sufferin' saints," sez he, chargin' up the stairs in a rage, " can't you answer me?"

But with that the sweep let another whillaloo out of him, an' bent two-double with the pain; an' the bag of soot just emptied itself carefully over Mr. Barrington from the crown of his head down. It was the turnin' point with Mr. Barrington. He let a roar out of him, dashed the soot out of his eyes, an' gripped the unfortunate sweep by the throat. Down the stairs he trailed him, shakin' the poor divil like a rat, an' along the hall. Then he sent him head-fore-

The sweep let another whillaloo out of him, an' bent double with the pain; an' the bag of soot just emptied itself carefully over Mr. Barrington.

most into the street with a hearty toe of his boot an' slammed the hall-door. An' all the time Mr. Anthony was at his heels callin' out in desperation :—

"He swept the dinin'-room chimney first, Barrington. Mrs. Shanks says he swept the dinin'-room chimney first!"

But Mr. Barrington give no heed to him. As he stalked back into the hall he fell on his mouth an' nose on the brushes that the sweep had dropped. He lepped to his feet with a string of oaths that would have filled a pass-book, grabbed the brushes, tore the door open, an' burst into the street in a cloud of soot, like a train comin' out of a tunnel.

By this time poor wee Mrs. Shanks was near in hysterics, between fear an' curiosity.

"But what is it all about, Mr. Anthony?" she sez, very pitiful. "Oh, what *is* it all about?"

"The whole thing is perfectly simple, Mrs. Shanks," sez Mr. Anthony, quite bland an' easy, but polishin' away very hard at his eye-glass, to gain time. "Chimney-sweepin's a dry job; we may have left the sideboard open; the sweep saw our whiskey bottle an' helped himself—liberally. Now, Mr. Lenahan—the fat gentleman, Mrs. Shanks—having complained in the Bank to my friend Mr. Barrington that he was suffering from what he called 'pains,' Mr. Barrington told him to come here an' he'd hurry after him an' give him a little whiskey to cure the pains. When Mr. Barrington took out the bottle half the whiskey was gone! He was bewildered. I was bewildered. We smelt soot, but didn't connect it with the theft. But as we left the dining-room after curing Mr. Lenahan, Barrington saw a sweep. He put two an' two together; an' I may tell you that if it wasn't his good fortune to enjoy the advice of the best solicitor in—in Ireland, begad—they'll add up in the end to considerably more than four, not to speak of costs. Just put the whiskey back in the sideboard, Mrs. Shanks. I want to have a few words on this unfortunate affair with Mr. Murphy upstairs.

"Did you hear me, Pat?" sez he to me, skippin' round the drawin'-room in great glee. "On the spur of the moment, mind you—just question an' answer. What a witness I would make! All explained, you see: Lenahan's pains—that they may gripe him to the Day of Judgment!" he threw in, just passin'—"Mr. Barrington's assault, an' the provocation for it—you saw how quickly I spotted that the sweep had been at the whiskey—no mention, you'll observe, of dosings or adulteration——"

"You're a wonder, Mr. Anthony," sez I; an', troth, it had been quick of him.

"——But as neat a stroke as any," sez he, rubbin' his hands, "was how I concealed the hidin'-place of the whiskey. Did you notice that, Pat? She'll think it was in the sideboard all the time. An' when our two fresh bottles go to their nest in the chimney to-morrow, she'll never be a bit the wiser, nor her son, either. I'm a great man in a tight place, now amn't I? But what's keepin' Barrington?" sez he, breakin' off an' lookin' at me very serious.

"I hope he hasn't got into any trouble with the polis, Mr. Anthony," sez I. "He followed that sweep terrible wicked."

"Ha!" sez Mr. Anthony, brightenin' up again, "begad, he might. The new sergeant's a terror, an' would lift the angel Gabriel for playin' music in the streets. This looks like another bit of professional business, I declare. What a pity there'll be nothin' but honour an' glory out of it for me. Sit down there, Pat, till I shave. I'll put on my frock-coat, too, just to intimidate the sergeant; an' then we'll be off to the barracks on chance."

An' you could see by his eye that anythin' Mr. Barrington might have committed on the sweep, short of manslaughter, would just be jam to Mr. Anthony.

But funny an' all as Mr. Anthony's antics were, if I'd only knowed it I was missin' far more fun outside.

I NEVER was clear how much of the doctored whiskey the sweep took, but, anyway, he knew he had took what didn't belong to him; an' whatever pains he was sufferin' was cured in a twinklin' by the fear he was in of Mr. Barrington. The minit he got himself gathered up at the foot of Mrs. Shanks's steps away he went like a hare, with his head down, along a lane to his left. But if he did, Mr. Gault, the Resident Magistrate, was walkin', very slow an' pompous, in the opposite direction. The sweep just took him in the middle of the waistcoat; an' the next minit an animal with four legs, an' all four kickin' like blazes, was rollin' over an' over in the road. The sweep had caught Mr. Gault to save himself, an' Mr. Gault had caught the sweep to keep him from gettin' away, an' by the time the sweep had fought himself free, Mr. Gault was liker a moultin' magpie nor a Resident Magistrate, an' the polisman he got hold of in the main street hardly knowed him.

The minit the polisman heard the complaint he out with his baton an' took to his heels. An' it behoved him to. The new sergeant had come down on the town like a blight, an' would have summoned you for suckin' the froth of a bottle of porter off your moustache after closin' hours. He had chased all the kindly old staff of polis that knowed the capacity of every man in

the town within one glass of whiskey; an the new bobbies was prowlin' round the streets as hungry for the human race as the lions in a travellin' menagerie.

But by this time it was fallin' dusk; an' with all the zeal in the world a polisman can't see very far with two out of five street lamps burnin' oil, an' the rest burnin' wicks. The sweep had half a street of a start of him, forbye. The constable took a turnin' too soon, an' too quick; an' Mr. Barrington, who had took the wrong turnin' himself, got him as full in the face with one of the sweep's long-handled brushes as if he'd been tiltin' at the Sports. There was no time for explainin'. The constable seen the black face, an' gripped Mr. Barrington by the throat. Mr. Barrington got one home on the constable's jaw with a wee hand-brush that the sweep kept for cleanin'-out flues, before he seen it was the law had him, an' gave in, but not in time to save himself from a welt of the baton that would have beat a carpet. Then off he went as quiet as a lamb, thankin' the powers that he was too sooty for the little knot of followers to recognize him. All the time he thought it was for what he had done on the sweep, an' hadn't a vestige of a notion that he was bein' marched to the barracks to be charged with an aggravated assault on the Resident Magistrate. When it did dawn on him he first of all near burst a blood-vessel with rage, an' then half-massacred the sergeant an' the constable that had arrested him, tryin' to fight his way out. For he hoped to break away without bein' known, an' then run home an' wash his face for a disguise. Two to one is big odds, however. In the end the pair were over-many for him, frog-marched him down the passage, an' flung him into the black-hole. An' when he got on his feet an' turned to see what he had fell over, who was it but Billy Lenahan stretched out on the floor sleepin' off the two-thirds of Mr. Anthony's bottle of whiskey.

The sergeant, bein' the superior officer, had come pretty well out of the tussle; but the constable had to change his tunic an' stop his nose bleedin'. By the time he got back to his beat he was near due to be relieved. An' as he made his way home to the barracks, now an' then feelin' the tip of his nose very gingerly an' thinkin' out all the fearful things he would swear at the Petty Sessions, here, comin' up the street fornent him at a half-run, was the very man he had threw into the black-hole a short while before! He paused in his step, looked again in the light of the first lamp that was lit; an' sure enough it was his man, brushes an' all.

"An escape, by the powers!" sez he. He loosened his baton for the second time that day, gave a yell of vengeance, an' the next minit he was tearin' down the middle of the road about twenty yards behind the sweep, after takin' a flyin' lepp over his brushes that would ha' cleared the water-jump at the Grand National.

FOR the sweep it was. After he had escaped, first Mr. Barrington, an' then the disaster with the Resident Magistrate, he was on the high-road to leave the town when all at once he minded he hadn't his brushes. What to do about them he did not know. He was afeared to face Mr. Barrington, an' still more scared of fallin' into the hands of the polis. An' as he skulked about the streets switherin' in his mind, here doesn't he come out right in front of the polis barracks. All was quiet, an' nobody to be seen. The fight with Mr. Barrington was over. The little crowd was melted. The sergeant was restin'; the reliefs was gone out; an' divil a one had thought of the brushes that was lyin' quite peaceable under the lamp in the front wall of the barracks.

The sweep took a hasty squint round, dashed across the road, boned his brushes, an' off up the road as quick as he thought he could go, till he came back down it again in front of the constable.

The race was over before anybody seen it begin. The sweep was far the lighter of the two on his feet; but breathin' soot an' coal-dust is bad for the bellows. Ten yards past the barracks door the constable ran him down; an' you should have seen that bobby's face as he marched *his* sweep into the guard-room by one door at the very minit that the sergeant marched *his* one in from the black-hole by the other!

I seen them both, for Mr. Anthony an' I only got to the barracks a couple or three minits before. In his usual way, Mr. Anthony had simply took charge of the whole concern, an' ordered the prisoners to be brought out of the black-hole; feelin' his way, of course, for he didn't know what had happened. The sergeant hadn't the courage to resist the eye-glass an' the frock-coat; an' as I told you, the two sweeps dead-heated into the guard-room, Billy Lenahan makin' a bad third. Mr. Anthony hadn't known what to expect; but what he seen was more than he had expected, an' for a minit he was clean punctured. Then he took in the whole situation—a deal sooner than I did, I'll acknowledge—an' the thought of his own cleverness blew him out to the size of a County Court Judge at the very least.

"This is an outrage," sez he, glarin' at the sergeant. "What authority have you for detaining my friend Mr. Barrington of the Bank like a common criminal?"

"Mr. Barrington?" sez the sergeant, gapin' round the room. "I see no Mr. Barrington."

"*This* is Mr. Barrington," sez Mr. Anthony, slapping Mr. Barrington on the shoulder till the soot rose out of him in clouds, "illegally imprisoned by you. Release him at once, sir, or take the consequences."

But the sergeant had got back his courage by this time, an' was beginnin' to lose his temper.

"I think, Mr. Anthony, you're takin' a little too much on you, even for a solicitor," sez he, purty stiff. "This man may be Mr. Barrington of the Bank or Mr. Barrington of the chimley, but he's charged with common assault an' assaultin' the polis, an' he'll remain in custody till I get hold of the Resident Magistrate, an' have a private Court held. Orderly," sez he, "go at once for Mr. Gault."

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," sez Mr. Anthony, flyin' into one of his best Petty Sessions rages, "that you refuse to release this gentleman——" He lifted his hand again.

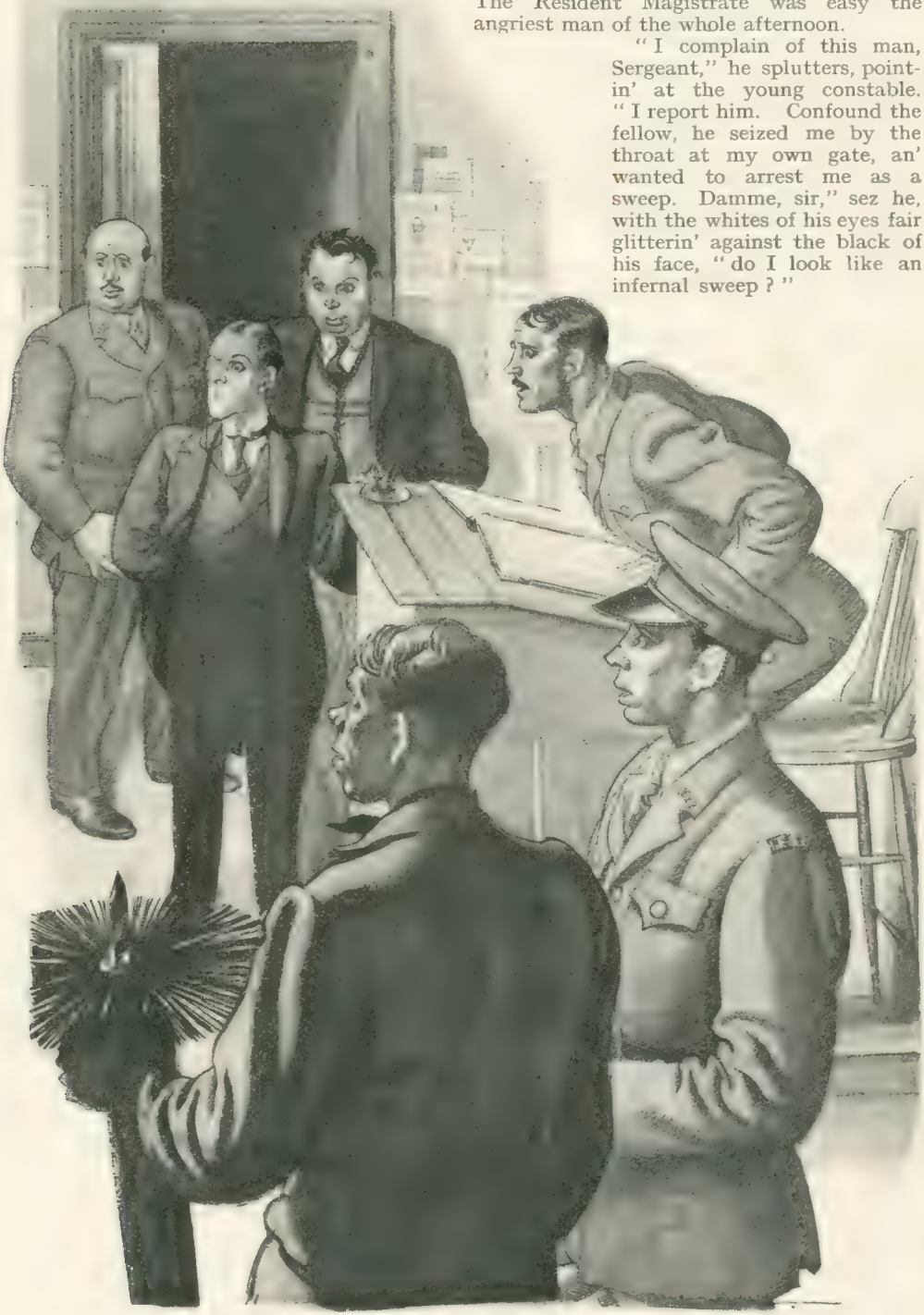
"Anthony," sez Mr. Barrington, very vicious, "if you raise any more soot in my face I'll do time for you."

"On second thoughts," sez Mr. Anthony to the sergeant, payin' no attention to Mr. Barrington, "on second thoughts, an' just to make it all the hotter for you, I'll wait for the Resident Magistrate."

"I complain of this man, Sergeant," he spluttered. "He seized me by the throat at my own gate, an' wanted to arrest me as a sweep."

He hadn't long to wait. In through the door bounces Mr. Gault himself, lookin' like a sweep in his Sunday clothes, an' behind him a very shamefaced young polisman. The Resident Magistrate was easy the angriest man of the whole afternoon.

"I complain of this man, Sergeant," he splutters, pointin' at the young constable. "I report him. Confound the fellow, he seized me by the throat at my own gate, an' wanted to arrest me as a sweep. Damme, sir," sez he, with the whites of his eyes fair glitterin' against the black of his face, "do I look like an infernal sweep?"



"Your Honour an' sergeant," speaks up the poor young fellow, near cryin', "it was reported to me by a respectable rate-payer of this town that a mad sweep had broke out of the County Asylum an' was massacreein' men, women, an' children with a joint of his brush. I spotted the black face in the light of his Honour's the Resident Magistrate's avenue lamp; but I declare to me God I had only laid my finger an' thumb on his windpipe when I recognized who it was, an' near fainted away."

Mr. Gault could be pompous enough at times, I know; but there was humour in him, too. He just put back his head an' laughed till his face was like the rivers of Europe with the tears. But when the rest of the misfortunes of the evenin' was unfolded before him, I thought he'd have gone off in an apoplexy.

It was enough for Mr. Anthony.

"Your Honour," sez he, very polite an' respectful, "if I may venture to say it, we're all friends here. Now, we are, Sergeant," sez he. "Don't be foolish enough to quarrel with me. You and I may have to scratch each other's backs many a time before you leave this town. You've heard the disasters of my clients, your Honour; with your permission I'll tell you how all the trouble arose." An' he out all over again with the yarn he had told Mrs. Shanks.

"Now I would suggest, your Honour," sez he, just gettin' well into his stride——

"You would," sez Mr. Gault, a trifle dry. "But I think you'd better let me take charge while I'm still amused. Sweep," sez he, "if it got about these parts that you went round takin' the soot out of your own throat instead of out of other people's chimneys it wouldn't be good for trade. You'd better lodge no complaint. Mr. Barrington, your wrath was righteous, but a little on the severe side. It might help your—your black brother along the path of virtue if you provided him with the means of keeping his throat free of soot for a day or two. Lenahan's case I don't quite understand."

But Billy was too able to miss his chance.

"Your Honour," sez he, "I'd be long sorry to contradict even a solicitor, but you haven't been told the truth, the whole truth, or anythin' like the truth. Mr. Anthony an' Mr. Barrington have done me an injury this day that I'll not be the better of till my dyin' hour. I *was* invited into your lodgin's, Mr. Anthony, as you say, but it was for an ordinary drink, not for rat poison——"

Mr. Anthony can't wink except with his eye-glass eye. He turned toward the Resident Magistrate, an' his eye-glass dropped.

"As I told you before, Lenahan," sez Mr. Gault, "I don't quite understand your case. But you were drunk, Lenahan. An' a big, powerful fellow like you seldom gets arrested without some kind of a scuffle. Drunk," sez Mr. Gault, countin' on his fingers, "assault on the police, a bad record in the matter of illicit spirits. You'll come before *me*, Lenahan——"

"If the two gentlemen'll make up a couple or three quid between them," sez Billy, who was no dunce, "I'll not spoil sport."

The Resident Magistrate looked at Mr. Anthony.

"We'll give the dirty big dog three pounds," sez Mr. Anthony, with venom.

"Very well," sez the Resident Magistrate. "You make no charge, then, Sergeant?"

"No, your Honour," sez the sergeant, chokin' on it a bit, all the same.

"Good," sez Mr. Gault, with a wise wee twinkle all round. "Then I'll go home an' wash my face."

"Would you mind leavin' the room for a little, Sergeant?" sez Mr. Anthony after the Resident Magistrate had gone. "Thank you. An' now, do you, sweep, an' you, Lenahan, go out into the passage."

He took a couple of sheets of paper out of his pocket and sat down at the sergeant's desk an' wrote for two or three minits.

"A pound for the sweep, Barrington?" sez he. "Eh?"

"Two," sez Mr. Barrington. "I never knew what soot tasted like till to-day."

"One," sez Mr. Anthony, snappin' his mouth very firm. "'In full settlement of all claims!'" he reads out. "Give him this pound, Pat; an' make him sign the indemnity. If he fell off a chimney an' broke his neck any time these ten years that fellow Lenahan would marry the widow an' blackmail us. Three pounds for that oily ruffian himself, that had the impudence to compare me to a pettifogger like Fitzsimons. He'll change his opinion, I think. Give him this envelope. An', Pat," sez he, "here's five shillin's. Hand over to Lenahan an' the sweep in Michael Cassidy's private bar, an' let the fun end where it started. Come up then to Mrs. Shanks's. I'm dying for my dinner."

I GAVE the sweep his money in Michael Cassidy's private room, an' a jorum that would have made ink of a whole bucket of soot, an' sent him off.

"Here," sez Billy Lenahan, holdin' out his hand. "Where's mine?"

"There it is," sez I; "an' I grudge it to you. Three good pounds for one or two gripes in your inside. You may well snigger." For he was shakin' like a jelly-fish with the laughin'.

" Will you keep a secret ? " sez he. " It's too good to have all to myself. The three of you followed me from Michael Cassidy's pub this afternoon, didn't you ? "

" I know we did," sez I.

" I saw you," sez he.

" Well, what if you did ? " sez I. " There's no great secret in that."

" That isn't the secret," sez Billy. " The secret is that I hardly lipped the doctored whiskey at all. Do you think a man that's been makin' poteen as long as I have doesn't know whiskey from medicine ? But I think you'll give in, Pat," sez he, grinnin' all over his face at the recollection, " that I managed to be purty sick on the little I did take."

I stood lookin' at him for a minit ; an' the scunner riz in me at the rascality an' cuteness of the big porpoise.

" Come on an' have a drink with me out of the profits," sez Billy, openin' the envelope. " Maybe that'll bring a smile to your face, you sour old——" He stopped all at once, an' stood glarin' at Mr. Anthony's letter. Then he read it all over again to himself with a look on his face as if it couldn't possibly be true.

" Oh, curse on the little window-eyed son of a dog ! " sez he, shakin' his clenched fist in the air. " May the divil——"

I wouldn't like to set down what Big Billy Lenahan put out of him as he danced round Michael's snug that night.

" Stop it, Billy," sez I, at the last. " In the name of the saints, what has Mr. Anthony said to you ? "

I snatched the letter from his hand, an' this is what I read :—

" Referring to the gratuity of £3 (Three pounds stg) to be given you by my client Mr. Barrington at the request of Mr. Gault, R.M. As advised by me my client is applying the said sum of three pounds in reduction of your overdue and unpaid Bill in the Downshire Bank. This course has been taken in your own interests with the object of preventing your being twice drunk at my client's expense on the same day."

I just opened the door, an' ran. Billy had started again, an' there was no tellin' when Michael Cassidy's whiskey might catch fire.

Mr. Anthony was still at his dinner when I went into the dinin'-room.

" Sit down, Pat," sez he. " I'm just finishin'. I waited awhile for Barrington, but he's still scraping himself. You did that little job ? "

" Mr. Anthony," sez I, " all I have to tell you is that the man that said Mr. Fitzsimons was cleverer nor you knows more about it now than he did."

CONTRARY to his usual Mr. Anthony didn't begin to make a song about himself, but looked at me very serious an' calm.

" Pat," sez he, " no matter how clever a man is—an' of course I'll give in I'm no dunce—there are times when things run awkward with him, an' he doesn't get showin' his abilities to the full. This afternoon I was fortunate. From the very first threatenin' of disaster till what I take the liberty of callin' the triumphant conclusion, everythin' turned out well in my hands. I've sat on the sergeant ; I've pleased the R.M. ; I've got my friend Barrington out of a nasty hole ; I've taught Mr. William Lenahan the difference between low cunnin' an'—an' genius ; I've given an unfortunate divil of a sweep a lesson, an' still dealt with him in a Christian manner ; an' now at the end of a successful but very tiring day," sez he, bowin' a bit old-fashioned to Mrs. Shanks, " owing to the unconscionable extent of my friend Barrington's ablutions I've been rewarded with two helps of my favourite Christmas pudding."

" I would have showed no Christianity to thon sweep, Mr. Anthony," sez Mrs. Shanks, puttin' down her tray, " after the hole he made in the whiskey. I declare to you there was just barely enough left in the bottle to make sauce for your puddin'."

Mr. Anthony looked at her. He said nothin' ; but he turned white ; an' I could see him grippin' the edge of the table with his two hands.

" Is *that* it ? " sez he, in a half-whisper. " Is *that* what it is ? An' I thought it was because I took the second help of puddin'. Run, Pat," he groans out, " run for the doctor !—Barrington, Mrs. Shanks, get Barrington !—I'm dyin', I'm dyin', an' my will not made. *A——h !* " He let a screech out of him an' doubled up, with his head on the table. As I ran out of the room I seen that his eye-glass had fell into the sauce-boat. But Mr. Anthony didn't care.

ON DEMAND

By FREDERICK SKERRY

Illustrated by W. R. S. STOTT

" THE foolishness of keeping letters ! " snorted Stephen Hull, glancing at his watch and pushing back his chair.

His secretary closed her notebook and rose. " Incriminating letters, you mean ? " asked Lorna Lee, regarding him soberly.

" All personal letters," Hull specified. " If one made a practice of destroying *all* personal letters—well, the conclusion is obvious." He tapped the little pile of papers on his desk, smallish sheets that exuded even now a faint perfume. " See what the foolish habit has done for Bragg—given his wife a fine handle for a divorce."

" On the other hand," argued Miss Lee, slyly, " see what his habit has done for his wife—you say she'll be well rid of him." Hull nodded with conviction. " But," Miss Lee went on, " ordinary personal letters—why, it seems callous somehow to destroy immediately after reading something a friend spent an hour, perhaps, in writing."

" Why does it ? Have you ever re-read, or even referred to, the old letters that, according to your comment, you must be keeping ? "

" No—no. But——"

" There you are. Their purpose was accomplished when you'd read them. Nowadays, people don't write anything worth preserving."

Miss Lee looked thoughtful. " Perhaps you're right," she mused. Then, looking at him with veiled fondness : " This case will mean a lot to you, won't it ? Reputation — prestige — they're such prominent people."

" It may mean more than that," he smiled, knowingly.

Lowering her eyes under his intent gaze, she asked, " Will Bragg defend the case ? "

" I don't know yet. But it won't be any use—these letters will settle it. If I thought," he smiled mischievously, ' you needed a lesson on what *not* to write to a man I'd advise you to read them. Anyhow, you might put them away for safe keeping

while I'm out. If another new client turns up, you can find me at the Sussex Grill."

Dapper Green's ears were as quick to detect a promising idea as his brain was to develop it. Such an idea was inspired by the conversation between two strangers who occupied the table next to his in the Sussex Grill, where Dapper was apparently attentive to nothing but the food before him. He had merely glanced at this Stephen Hull, whose entrance had suddenly turned the men's conversation into an interesting channel, but, after hearing a few more words he observed Hull carefully, while he strained his ears to catch every word of the low-toned talk. There wasn't much of it, but it was enough for Dapper. His friend Henri, the waiter, in response to a soundless inquiry, identified the important factor at the next table. And with the whispered name, "Dick Bragg," a name synonymous with money, Dapper Green's scheme crystallized.

Letters were rather out of his regular line. But what odds? Con-work, dope, blackmail—they were all one to Dapper. No question about Bragg's wanting those letters. But he probably wouldn't want to be a party to the scheme beforehand. It wasn't likely, anyhow, that there'd be more than one divorce case, with letters, at the same time in this young lawyer's office. Somebody would pay good money for them; if Bragg wouldn't, his wife would. Just steal the letters.

MISS LEE was alone when Dapper Green appeared shortly after noon on the following day. She glanced up casually from her desk in the outer office when he entered, but as he turned the key in the lock she started from her chair.

"What are you doing?" she cried. "Unlock that door!"

Dapper's lips twisted in a grin. "Easy now, miss!" he warned, softly, displaying in his open palm a stubby revolver. "And get away from that telephone. That's better. I shouldn't like to be rough with a lady—especially a nice girl like you—but I can be." He dropped the revolver into a coat pocket, with the observation, "You'd be surprised how quick it can come out."

"What do you want?" demanded Miss Lee, memorizing every detail of his face.

"That's a fair question!" he grinned. "Well, I want those letters from the woman in the Bragg case. And quick!"

"But," Miss Lee temporized, "I'll get into trouble if I give you letters from this office."

"Not half as much as you will if you don't, miss. What's it matter to you, anyway? It's not your funeral. So you be quick!"

"Well——" With noticeable reluctance, Miss Lee went to a row of steel filing cabinets, pulled out a drawer, took from it a small packet. "There," she sighed, handing it over, "if you must have it."

Dapper Green slipped off the rubber band, opened the first folded sheet, and read: "Precious Toots." He looked at the next: "Dearest Toots." The next: "Darlingest Toots." There were a couple of dozen, and his nostrils flared a little as he caught their scent. He glanced at the signatures of several. "Elsie, eh? That the woman's name?"

"Certainly," declared Miss Lee.

"Right, miss," he said, snapping the rubber band into place and pocketing the packet. "Now there's one little thing more before I go; turn your back."

Miss Lee turned her back, and through the window of the inner office gazed across miles of roof tops. Suddenly clutched from behind, she tried to scream, but the cloth that pressed against her nose and mouth stifled her. She felt herself fainting.

WHEN she opened her eyes it was to blink, her mind groping, into the blanched face of Stephen Hull, bent over her, his arm supporting her shoulders.

"Lorna, dearest!" His fright precipitated an avowal long contemplated. "What happened?" he asked, huskily.

Slowly she realized that she was on the floor and tried to rise. Hull helped her to a chair, left her to fetch a glass of water. "Here, darling, drink this." And when she had gulped a mouthful, "Feeling better?"

"A little dizzy, that's all." She brushed a hand across her eyes. "It was a thief with a revolver. He came after those Bragg letters. I can describe him minutely."

Stephen Hull glanced about the orderly room. "Why didn't you let him have them?" he groaned. "I'd much rather have lost them than let this happen to you. Why didn't you?"

Miss Lee smiled wanly. "I didn't need to. You remember our talk about saving letters yesterday? Well, I had a bunch here—from an old school chum who still uses my school nickname, 'Toots.' I got rid of those. He didn't appear to know the difference."

"Great Scott!" His amazement brought a brighter smile to her lips.

"Elsie's are the only letters," she went on, "that come to the office. Elsie never could remember my various home addresses—you see, she's one of those people who destroy a letter as soon as they've read it."

A BULLDOG DRUMMOND STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF THE STUDIO

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

The mysterious death of Bob Marton, a junior member of a firm of solicitors, Marton, Peters, and Newall, leads Bulldog Drummond and his friends, Ted Jerningham and Peter Darrell, to suspect that Marton has been murdered by a criminal gang consisting of Hardcastle, an American, Slingsby, Penton, and a Comtessa Bartelozzi, who poses as Hardcastle's daughter. Drummond discovers that the Comtessa is an associate of the notorious Irma Peterson, and he meets the Comtessa at a London night-club in the hope of bluffing information out of her. Hardcastle is the owner of a film studio, and from the effect on the Comtessa of a casual remark of Drummond's about the studio, Drummond gathers that the secret of Marton's murder will be found there. The Comtessa leaves Drummond and goes to a house in South Audley Street, where the gang, including Irma Peterson, is assembled. They have just decided to destroy Drummond, because they think he has stumbled on their secret, when he astonishes them by appearing in their midst.

FOR a moment or two there was dead silence in the room: then Hardcastle sprang to his feet.

"How the devil did you get in here?" he shouted.

Drummond held up a protesting hand.

"How did I get in? Through an open window in the basement."

"How did you find this house, Captain Drummond?" said the Comtessa, quietly.

"My heart smote me, dear lady, when you left the Custard Pot alone. So I leaped into another taxi and told the driver to follow you."

A faint smile was playing round his lips.

"I think it is the grossest piece of impertinence I have ever heard of in my life," the Comtessa said, icily. "What is there to prevent my ringing up the police and giving you in charge for housebreaking?"

"Absolutely nothing," said Drummond, brightly. "There is the telephone in the corner."

She bit her lip, and turned appealingly to Madame Saumur, who was staring thoughtfully at Drummond.

"Look here, young man," said Penton, aggressively, "are you going to clear out of your own free will, or am I going to pitch you out on your ear?"

"Not on my ear, I beg of you," cried Drummond, anxiously. "I shall probably have to consult an aurist anyhow to-morrow. The draught through that keyhole of yours is positively wicked."

"You mean that you've been listening," said Hardcastle, softly.

"Yes, dear Tom. My ear has been glued to the orifice for quite a time. I heard you all being ticked off by Irma—I beg your pardon, Madame, Natalie—you naughty things."

The three men began to crowd in on him, and Drummond's smile grew.

"Apropos of ringing up the police, Comtessa," he remarked, "I wouldn't be surprised if there isn't one knocking about outside. There was when I got out of my taxi thirty or forty yards away. A charming young fellow. And the instant I saw him I felt impelled to give him my celebrated impersonation of a gentleman who has taken one over the eight. 'Ole friend of my youth,' I hiccoughed at him, 'my name is Drummond, Captain Hugh Drummond. And I live at Queen Anne's Mansions. What then you ask me am I doing up here? I will tell you. I am visiting a lady—a very beautiful lady—the Comtessa Bartelozzi. But, my dear old officer, like so many beautiful ladies, she has a jealous husband. If therefore my dead body is found lying about the streets you will know where to start inquiries.' Then I kissed him on both cheeks and we parted."

"I don't know what the devil to do with you," snarled Hardcastle.

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"There would seem to be two alternatives," said Drummond, affably. "Either get in my young friend from outside, or else offer me a drink and we will chat. Of course, there is a third—we might have a rough house."

He strolled over to the fireplace and lit a cigarette.

"So we meet again, Drummond, do we?" said Madame Saumur.

"My dear," he cried, "I protest. As a conversational effort after all these years that remark is not worthy of you."

"How long have you been listening outside that door?"

"From the acute agony in my ear I should put it at a day or two," he answered. "But maybe it was worth it. Anyway, tell me—just to satisfy my vulgar curiosity—why did you murder young Marton? He seemed to me a poor sort of specimen, but comparatively harmless withal."

"Are you mad?" said Hardcastle. "What possible reason could we have for killing him?"

"That's just what I'm asking you, Tom. It seems such a drastic method of dealing with the poor bloke."

"I presume you're trying to be funny, Captain Drummond," answered Hardcastle. "Or else your conversation with the policeman outside is indicative of your true condition. Why, if you suffered from this absurd delusion, did you say nothing about it at the inquest?"

"I said nothing about it," said Drummond, "because though I knew it, I was, and am, quite unable to prove it."

"Then how dare you make such a monstrous accusation?" shouted Slingsby. "Are you aware, you young cub, that we can sue you for libel?"

"Of course," agreed Drummond, pleasantly. "Why not start proceedings tomorrow? And in the meantime, may I help myself to a drink? In the past, Madame"—he turned to the woman in the chair, who was still watching him steadily—"I was a little chary of drinking at any of your parties, but I feel that, since you were not expecting me, this whisky will prove quite safe."

He splashed some soda into his glass and returned to the fireplace. It was a dangerous game that he was playing, and no one was more alive to it than Drummond himself. As a matter of fact he had heard very little outside the door; he had only got there a few seconds before he had heard the question as to where he lived. But he fully realized that whatever he might have heard would prove useless if they rang up the police. It was only his word against all of theirs, and they would simply deny his statements. Further, he had put himself outside the law by breaking into the house in the first place. In fact, they held every card except one. And if they had only known it they held that, too. But because they did not know it, they dared not ring up the police-station for fear of what he might say, not with regard to the past, but with regard to the future. And the humour of the situation was that on that point they need not have feared at all.

"As far as I can make out, Drummond," said Madame Saumur, quietly, "your assertion is that young Marton was murdered by these three gentlemen."

"Exactly, Madame."

"And in view of the evidence, what makes you think so?"

"The conviction that he was not murdered by Morris."

She raised her eyebrows.

"Really. Your logic appears to me a little thin. Why, because for some obscure reason of your own you consider Morris innocent, should you consider them guilty?"

"The reason is hardly obscure, but very simple. They were the only people who could have done it."

"My recollection of the evidence hardly bears that out. Who first found the body?"

And, for the fraction of a second, Drummond stiffened. All too clearly he saw the line she was going to take up. But his voice was perfectly calm as he answered: "My friends and I."

"Indeed," she murmured. "Then it seems to me that you also could have done it."

"Except for the trifling difficulty that the first thing that took us upstairs was the sight of the blood on the ceiling."

"So you say. I regret that I am unable to believe you. I have only your word for it."

By "SAPPER"

Illustrated by A. R. THOMSON

"What possible reason could we have for murdering him?"

"What possible reason had they?"

Drummond began to laugh, though his brain was working at full pressure.

A super bluff, of course; but a clever one. It was a bold attempt to force his hand one way or the other.

"Come, come, my dear lady," he answered. "You can't expect to catch an old stager like myself quite as easily as that. Marton, when I saw him, was in a state of pitiable agitation, far too pronounced to be accounted for by such comparative trifles as over-drinking and late hours. He was frightened out of his wits about something, and, since I'd never seen the fellow before, it couldn't have been anything to do with me. A few hours later he is found battered to death at Glensham House. The connexion seems obvious, doesn't it?"

"Once again we have only your word for all this," she said.

"And a pretty line in words it is, too," he remarked. "Irma, my pet, I can assure you that any faint lingering doubts I possessed as to what happened that night at Glensham House were dispelled the moment I saw you at Paddington. And, one other thing I propose to say," he continued, grimly, swinging round on the three men. "Of all the damnable methods of killing the poor devil, yours won in a canter. I admit that it was quick to take advantage of Morris having blundered into the house, and act as you did on the spur of the moment. But it shows a cold-blooded ferocity that I have never heard equalled before. And I tell you here and now, I'm going to get level with you over it."

The masks were off their faces now. In another moment the three of them would have been at him, and he crouched a little, waiting for the attack. And then Madame Saumur's quiet laugh broke the tension.

"The same old Drummond," she cried, "but this time with quite a hive of bees in his bonnet. Listen, *mon ami*, and we will see just where we stand. Evidently nothing that we can say will get this absurd delusion out of your head. And, really, my dear Hugh, as far as we are concerned, it can remain there. I think I have shown you fairly clearly that, with

your strange obsession to vindicate Morris, you and your friends have laid yourselves open—in the eyes of the police—to grave suspicion."

"Why not ring up the police now?" he said, quietly.

"For a very good and simple reason," she answered. "My friends and I are engaged at the moment in a very important business deal. The last thing we desire is the publicity which would inevitably attend the investigation of your ridiculous charge. We really have not got the time for such folly. And it is for that reason only that we have tolerated your monstrous impertinence in breaking in here to-night."

"Splendid," laughed Drummond. "I congratulate you. And, supposing I went to Scotland Yard, and told them one or two things. Emphasized, for instance, the strange fact that the weapon with which it was done has never been found; mentioned the footmarks on the carpet at Merridale Hall, and a few other points of that sort."

In another moment the three of them would have been at Drummond. And then Madame Saumur's quiet laugh broke the tension.

"You pain me, Drummond," she said; "positively pain me. In the past, my friend, you always had a rooted objection to the police, and this time it has recoiled on you. Their first remark to you would be to ask why these things were not mentioned at the inquest. You can't disregard them, you know, and then call them in. No, *mon ami*. Somehow or other I don't quite see you going to Scotland Yard."

"Perhaps you're right," he agreed. "You were always quick on the uptake, weren't you, dear one? And so, that being that, I will reluctantly bid you *au revoir*, as I don't think we shall get very much farther at the moment."

He crossed the room and picked up his hat.

"Doubtless we shall meet anon," he remarked from the door.

He let himself into the street, which was deserted, and began to stroll towards Piccadilly. And, as he rounded the first corner, he almost ran into a man in evening clothes, who was coming the other way.

"A thousand apologies, sir," remarked the stranger, taking off a soft black hat. "Could you tell me if I am anywhere near South Audley Street?"

He spoke with a strong foreign accent, and Drummond, glancing at his face by the light of a street lamp, put him down as an Italian.

"You are actually in South Audley Street," he answered.

"Thank you," said the other. "Sorry to have troubled you, but I am a stranger to London."

"Not at all," remarked Drummond, politely. "Good night."

He walked on, and in a moment the incident had passed from his mind. Other somewhat disquieting thoughts occupied it, which boiled down to the conviction that he had made a damned fool of himself. Useless to say that the impulse to enter the room on hearing Irma's question had been so overwhelming that he could never have resisted it. The fact remained that he had acted like an ass.

Had he stopped outside the door, he might, and probably would, have heard something of value. As it was, he had learned nothing at all. And, not only that, he had successfully put them on their guard.

Another thing, too, would be an inevitable result of his foolishness. He would not be received with a brass band and a red carpet at the studio. Having called the owner a murderer, he could scarcely expect to be greeted by him like a long-lost brother. Moreover, the same thing applied to Peter Darrell. It would be useless for him to turn up in the morning in answer to the advertisement. And the devil of it was that he felt instinctively that in the studio lay the solution of the whole problem.

One "t" had certainly been crossed as a result of the interview. The men were an ugly bunch of customers. His bluff concerning the policeman had worked all right this time, but he was under no delusions with regard to the future. Up to date they had not been sure as to what he knew; now that uncertainty was over. And he realized that if an opportunity arose they would have no scruples whatever in putting him out of the way if they could.

However, that aspect of the matter troubled him not at all. What did annoy him was that as a result of his impetuosity in entering the room when he did he was fighting in the dark. And as he let himself into his flat he was cursing himself wholeheartedly.

A LIGHT was shining under the sitting-room door. Darrell and Jerningham were inside waiting for him.

"Chaps," he remarked, "you here perceive the most triple distilled damned fool in London."

They listened in silence while he told them what had happened, and then Ted Jerningham spoke.

"It's certainly not your brightest effort, old boy," he remarked. "In fact, it seems to me you've completely queered our pitch. We don't know where to begin."

"We begin in the studio, Ted, if only we can get inside the bally place."

"Look here," said Darrell, "Algy answers to that advertisement just as well as I do. And they don't know him."

"Irma does," said Drummond.

"We'll have to chance her not being there. I saw him this evening, as it happens, beetling round at Ciro's. It's a late night there. Let's ring up and see if we can get hold of him."

"Right you are, Peter. It's worth trying. Tell him to come round here."

They caught him just as he was leaving, and a quarter of an hour later he arrived.

"I have met," he remarked on entering, "the only woman in the world. Her charm is as of an exotic orchid; her eyes are as mountain violets——"

"Sit down," said Drummond, "and cease talking such unmitigated bilge. You're going on the films to-morrow."

"I'm going on the what?" cried Algy, a cigarette half-way to his lips.

"Listen, Algy," said Drummond. "The game is afoot. Whom do you think we've butted into once more?"

Algy Longworth stared at him.

'Not Irma?" he burst out at length. "Don't tell me that, old lad."

"Just her and no one else," answered Drummond.

"Put your nose into that," cried Darrell, throwing the copy of *Film Echoes* at Algy. "It's the paragraph marked with a blue pencil."

"But what the deuce has this got to do with Irma?" Algy demanded, after he had read it. "I saw you were getting mixed up in something or other down in Devonshire. In fact, I very nearly came down to see what was up. Tell me all about it."

Briefly Drummond ran over the events of the past few days, and when he had finished Algy Longworth nodded thoughtfully.

"I get you," he said. "Rightly or wrongly you believe that the key of the mystery lies in Blackwater studio, and you want me to see if I can spot anything?"

"That's the notion, old lad. It's a forlorn hope, and if by chance Irma is there and sees you, you'll probably get bunged into the river."

"Oh, yeah—Cuthbert," grunted the other. "But, joking apart, old boy, it is as you say a mighty forlorn hope. I mean, if there is any dirty work going on down there, it's not going to be where anyone walking in casual like is going to see it. The blokes will probably take one look at my face, burst into floods of tears, and that will end the interview."

"Can't help it, Algy; we've got to try it. It's the only hope. Why, dash it, old boy, you might even get taken on, in which case you'd have the run of the studio."

'Damn it. I don't want to act in a film, Hugh," said Longworth. "I am sick with love. Every moment of my life is occupied."

'What is she like, this new girl of yours?" demanded Drummond. 'What I want to know is whether she has a face at which an ordinary man can look without using smoked glasses. Yes or no?"

'Most emphatically yes," spluttered Longworth.

"Right! Then take her down with you to-morrow," said Drummond. "When you're in love your brain is more microscopic than usual, and she might very likely notice one or two things that you wouldn't. Tell her a certain amount, but not everything. Leave out all the Devonshire part of the show. Just tell her to keep her eyes open and see if she can spot anything suspicious. She might even apply for a part herself."

'Listen, chaps," said Algy, thoughtfully. 'Two days ago, when I first met her at a cocktail party, and we talked awhile on the drama and bimetallism, she said something about films——" He frowned horribly at the mental strain. "Was it that she adored Charlie Chaplin, or was it that she herself had once played a part at Elstree?"

"There would seem to be a trifling difference," said Drummond, mildly.

"At any rate, I think it's a deuced good idea," went on Longworth, happily. "We will have a healthy day in Kent to-morrow."

"Essex, you fool. And no dallying on the road. Now push off. I want to go to bed."

BUT for a long time after the others had gone Hugh Drummond sat on smoking.

And when at last he got up and switched off the light, there was a glint in his eyes which those who know him well could have interpreted at once. He had evolved a plan, and the plan seemed to him to be good.

Moreover, it still seemed good to him when his servant Denny arrived the next morning with tea and the daily papers. Many an idea conceived overnight fails to stand the remorseless logic of the following day, but this one did. It was simple, and more or less foolproof, and for the space of two cigarettes he cogitated over it. Then he opened *The Times*, more from habit than from any desire to see the news. And, as he glanced down the Court Circular, one item caught his eye.

"*Sir Edward Greatorex arrived at the Ritz-Carlton yesterday afternoon from Berlin. He expects to remain in London about a fortnight.*'

The name seemed vaguely familiar, and for a while he lay in bed trying to remember where he had heard it. And then, suddenly, it came to him. Greatorex was the man the Comtessa had mentioned overnight as lunching with Hardcastle that day. A well-known business man was how she described him, in which case he presumably was quite capable of looking after himself. For his sake, at any rate, reflected Drummond as he went into the bathroom, he hoped so.

Breakfast over, he proceeded to ring up Algy Longworth.

"Look here, old boy," he said, "there's a point that occurred to me after you'd gone last night. If Irma is down at the studio, you're stung anyway. But if she isn't, it would be better for you not to give your real name."

"Right you are, Hugh," came the answer. 'I've just rung up Laura, and she's all on for coming. And she has acted in a small part."

"You didn't say anything about what I told you last night over the 'phone, did you?"

"Not a word. I'm lunching with her and we'll push down afterwards. Where shall I find you this evening to report the doings?"

"Come to the club, Algy, about nine.'

He rang off, and lit a cigarette thoughtfully. Then he shouted for Denny.

'We're on the warpath again, old warrior," he said, as his servant came in. "And for the next few days I shall be here, and I shall not be here. Do you get me?"

"You mean, sir, that you wish to be thought within when in reality you are without."

"More or less, Denny. There will probably be a caller or two, and almost certainly some telephone messages. You will have to deal with them, and either I have just gone out or I am just coming in. If at luncheon time I am feeding at a private house—not an hotel: don't forget that. Dinner the same thing. In short, I want you to give the impression that I am leading my ordinary normal life in London. Do you get me?"

"Perfectly, sir. I am to be vague as to your actual movements, but definite that movement is taking place."

"You've hit it. I shall sleep here tonight; after that it's doubtful. Look up my small automatic sometime to-day, and see that it is oiled and pulling light."

"Very good, sir. And, in case of necessity, where can I get hold of you?"

Drummond thought for a moment or two.

"Post Office, Colchester," he said. "Address me as Henry Johnson and use a common envelope."

"Exactly, sir," said Denny. "Is that all, sir?"

"Yes, Denny, it is. Give me my hat and stick. The club will find me for the next hour or so. Should anyone ring up, you can tell 'em so."

Refusing a taxi he started to stroll across the Park.

TWO men whom he knew slightly were in the smoking-room of his club, and he nodded to them as he passed. And he was just going to sit down when a sentence from one of them caught his ear.

"I see that fellow Greatorex has arrived in London."

The speaker was a stockbroker, and acting on a sudden impulse, Drummond crossed over to where they were sitting.

"I couldn't help over-hearing your remark, Blackton," he said. "Who is this man Greatorex? Somebody mentioned him last night and seemed surprised I'd never heard of him. Business bird of sorts, isn't he?"

"I don't think he'd be particularly flattered at that description," answered the other, with a laugh. "Sir Edward Greatorex is a man before whom Governments tremble. He's an international financier with a finger in innumerable pies."

"Is he wealthy?"

"Wealthy! My dear fellow, he's one of the three richest men in the world. He *is* the richest, save for one or two Indian Maharajahs, outside America."

'What is he doing over here?'

'Ask me another. And he is one of the hardest men to get near there is."

"I see," said Drummond. 'No wonder people were surprised last night at my ignorance."

He lounged back to his own chair, thoughtfully. What was a man like that doing in the Hardcastle galley? True, Hardcastle was reputed to be wealthy, but Greatorex seemed pretty high game for him to have a business lunch with. He glanced at his watch. A sudden idea had come to him. It was just half-past eleven. The bar at the Ritz-Carlton would be open. Charlie, the barman, was an old friend. He would go round there and have a cocktail. With luck he might see the man himself. Anyway, Charlie was a positive fountain of gossip

WHEN he got there the bar was empty save for the barman polishing glasses, who hailed him delightedly.

'Good morning, sir," he cried. "It's a long while since you've been here."

"Morning, Charlie,' said Drummond. "I'll gargle with a Bronx."

"How are you, sir?" continued the other. "You're looking as fit as ever."

"Just living from hour to hour. Anyone interesting stopping in the pub?"

Charlie shook his head.

'Business very slack, sir. We've had a good season on the whole, but it's pretty well over. Sir Edward Greatorex is here for a fortnight but he's no help to me." The barman grinned. "Strict teetotaller, sir."

"What sort of a fellow is he, Charlie?"

'Well, sir," said the other, confidentially, "the last time he was here he stayed for three weeks. He had the royal suite, and most of his meals were served in it. And when he left he tipped the floor waiter a quid in mistake for a ten-bob note, and then wanted change when he found out what he'd done."

"Mean as that, is he?"

'Mean, sir? Why, if people write him enclosing stamped envelopes for his reply, he first of all floats the stamps off, and then borrows the hotel gum to stick 'em on his own letters."

Two men were coming down the stairs. And Drummond, as he studied the leader, was conscious of a little shock of surprise. For somewhere, at some time or other, he had seen him before.

'That's a good 'un, Charlie," laughed Drummond.

'I wouldn't be that poor bloke of a secretary of his—not if you paid me five thousand a year," went on the other. "Treats him like a dog, he does."

He gave a sudden cough, and with a warning look at Drummond turned to greet a man who had just entered the bar.

"Good morning, sir. The usual, I suppose?"

"Please, Charlie."

And Drummond, happening to glance at the newcomer, gave a little start of surprise. It was the man who had asked him the way to South Audley Street the previous night. He knew him immediately, though the other showed no sign of recognition. And then he remembered that during the few seconds they had talked his back had been to the street lamp, leaving his own face in shadow.

For a moment or two he debated whether he should remind the stranger of their meeting, and ask him if he had found his destination all right. Then he decided not to. He had no desire to drink with him, which the other would probably suggest if he spoke. So he picked up a midday paper and ran his eye down the racing news, until the man, having finished his drink, left the bar.

"Funny we should have been talking about him, sir, just as he came in," said Charlie.

Drummond stared at him in surprise.

'You mean that he is the secretary?" he said at length.

"Of course, sir. That's why I coughed."

"Well, I'm damned," said Drummond. "So he is the secretary, is he? Charlie, give me another Bronx."

The barman looked at him curiously.

'Almost looks as if you knew him, sir."

"No, I don't know him. But I've seen him. He has the hell of a time, has he?"

"All of that from what I hear, sir. And yet he seems to stick it all right. He was with Sir Edward the last time he was here, and that's eighteen months ago."

'Italian, I should imagine."

Charlie nodded.

'Gardini is his name—Benito Gardini. He generally comes in here in the morning for a quick one. Your Bronx, sir."

"Thank you, Charlie. Have one yourself. Look here, could you find out something for me? I want to know if Sir Edward is lunching in his suite to-day, or whether he's coming downstairs."

'Certainly, sir. Nothing easier." He turned round. "Bert," he called.

A youth in his shirtsleeves popped his head out of an inner sanctum.

'Yes, Mr. Green."

'Put on your coat and run upstairs to Number Forty. Get hold of Leonard, and find out whether lunch is being served in the room or not. And look slippy."

'I'm rather curious to see Sir Edward," said Drummond, as the boy departed. "I've heard so much about him, but to the best of my belief I've never even seen a picture of him."

"He doesn't look a bad sort at all, sir," said Charlie. "Tall, with a small fair beard. But handsome is as handsome does. Well, Bert?"

'Number Forty is going hout for lunch, Mr. Green," said the boy. "Leonard don't know where, but 'e 'eard them talking abaht it this morning. There's a car coming for them at 'alf past twelve."

"Well done, Bert," said Drummond, handing him a shilling

He glanced at his watch: twenty minutes past twelve. He would take up a position in the lounge that commanded both exits, and since the secretary would almost certainly accompany Greatorex, at any rate as far as the car, there would be no difficulty in spotting him.

He found a suitable chair and lit a cigarette. The Comtessa's house was in South Audley Street. Was that where the secretary had been going? He wished now that he had waited to see, but there had been nothing in the harmless request for direction which could possibly have aroused his suspicions. And so it was the purest guesswork that her house had been his destination, but if the guess was correct it was a funny hour to make a call.

A SUDDEN stir in the lounge roused him from his reverie. Two men were coming down the stairs, and one of them was Gardini. And for the second time that morning Drummond, as he studied the other, was conscious of a little shock of surprise. For somewhere, at some time or another, he had seen him before. The man's face was definitely familiar, and for a long time after they had passed through the lounge he sat on trying to puzzle out where they could have met. But try as he would it eluded him, and when finally he left the hotel himself, he could only imagine that Sir Edward must have been pointed out to him on one of his previous visits to England, and that he had forgotten all about it. In any event his hour at the Ritz-Carlton had not been wasted.

For the rest of the afternoon he killed time. There was nothing to do now except wait for Algy Longworth. He turned up just after nine, and a glance at his face showed that something had happened.

"The most extraordinary thing, old boy," he cried. "They have engaged both of us."

"The devil they have," said Drummond. 'Let's hear all about it."

"We rolled up to the studio at half-past three," began the other. "And the first thing that hit one was the army of blokes who had evidently come in answer to the advertisement. However, I beetled up to a door-keeper warrior, and told him what I wanted.

First left, second right,' he said, wearily. 'There are only about sixty in front of you.'

"So we joined the glad throng, and after a while we noticed one thing. We might be sixtieth, but it wasn't going to take long. Each interview was the shortest thing on record: it was more like a procession passing by a judge. At last our turn came, and in

There flashed over the Italian's face a look of diabolical hatred. There was murder in it. An instant silence settled on the room.

I barged with Laura. A damned great fellow in shirtsleeves, with a cigar in his mouth, was sitting at a table. He took one look at me and shook his head.

" ' No go,' he said. Next.' "

' But I thought you said they'd taken you," cried Drummond.

" Wait a moment, old boy ; I'm coming to that. Out we pushed again, wondering how we could get a closer look at the place. All we'd seen up to date were a couple of passages and a small room. The door into the actual studio was shut, and when we started to go in the commissionaire fellow let out a shout.

" ' Not allowed in there,' he cried, ' without a permit.'

" And we were just on the point of pushing off when another man in shirtsleeves came dodging through the crowd that still blocked the passage.

" ' Hi ! You ! ' he called out to me, ' you're wanted. Come back to the office, and the young lady, too.'

"So back we went, and found the big man still sitting there.

" ' Are you both wanting engagements ? ' he asked.

" ' That's the idea,' I said. ' Anything doing ? '

" ' Not with regard to the advertisement,' he answered. ' You don't fill that bill. But it occurred to me after you'd gone, that as there are two of you, we might be able to arrange something. Ever done any film work ? '

" I told him that I hadn't, but that Laura had, and to cut a long story short we were engaged at five pounds a week each. She gave her real name of Laura Mainwaring. I gave mine as Algy Wentworth.

" ' I don't quite know what we shall fix you with,' he said, in conclusion, ' but there are one or two small parts that remain to be filled. Mr. Slingsby '—he was the man who had come after us and fetched us back—' will take you along into the studio and introduce you to our producer, Mr. Haxton. You'd better just have a look round and get the atmosphere of the piece we are doing. Society picture, with strong human appeal.'

" So off we toddled to meet Mr. Haxton, and to begin with Mr. Haxton was not amused. He wanted to know what he was expected to do with us, as he couldn't possibly begin shooting our bit for a week at least. However, Slingsby pacified him, and that was that. So the net result is that we have both been taken on, and if there's anything to find out we've got a reasonable chance of doing it."

" Did everything seem quite normal ? " asked Drummond.

' Absolutely," said the other. ' We watched 'em shoot an impassioned love scene between the two principals. Then we strolled about."

' What sort of place is it ? "

" Pretty big. Laura says you could do three or four pictures there at the same time."

" Are you both going down to-morrow ? "

" That's the notion. What are you going to do ? "

" I shall totter about somewhere, Algy," said Drummond, vaguely. " I might even put my nose in at the studio. If I do, of course, you don't know me."

" What happens if I find out anything ? " demanded the other.

" If I'm in the club you can come and tell me about it ; and if I'm not drop me a line to the flat."

" Right you are, old boy. Laura and I are having a bite somewhere, so I'll push off."

The door swung to behind him and Drummond ordered a whisky-and-soda. The big man had presumably been Penton. Why had he changed his mind over engaging Algy Longworth ? Was it that he genuinely did want to fill two minor parts ; if so, there were scores of actors with experience from whom he could make a selection. So, why Algy ? It was possible that the two of them going in together had influenced him, but if that were so why didn't he think of it at once ? And Drummond was still cogitating over the problem when, an hour later, he switched off his bedroom light.

SIR EDWARD GREATOREX was enjoying himself. Stretched at ease in the most comfortable chair of his luxurious suite at the Ritz-Carlton, he had permitted himself the extravagance of a cigar. On a small table at his side stood a shaded reading-lamp and a bottle of Vichy water. On his knees were some typewritten sheets of paper clipped together at one corner.

The title of the document he was reading was " High Finance," an eminently suitable one for the great financier, but one which strangely enough, from time to time, caused him to laugh. Occasionally, too, he frowned, making little clucking sounds indicative of displeasure.

But if any onlooker, who had been privileged to intrude on Sir Edward's privacy, had imagined that these manifestations were due to scorn or disapproval of the financial opinions expressed by the writer, he would have been sadly wrong. If, further, he had peeped over the reader's shoulder he would have been hard put to it to reconcile the title with the script. What,

for instance, had the following paragraph to do with the finer points of international exchanges ?—

"*Paula enters the room, and believing for the moment that it is empty, allows her utter despair to show on her features. Ruin stares the man she loves in the face. Foolishly, perhaps, but not fraudulently, he has been dabbling in interests which were too big for him, and now he has lost everything——*"

'Serves the damned fool right," came a mutter from the chair.

"*'Is there nothing to be done?' she asks herself again. Must she stand by and see Jack go down and out? Distraught, she turns towards the window, and for the first time she sees that the man principally responsible for her lover's ruin is in the room watching her with an amused smile.*"

Once again Sir Edward laid the typescript on his knee ; that, he reflected, was the stuff to give 'em. He fancied himself in that part, and with a cautious glance towards the next room where his secretary was going through the evening mail, he got up and stood in front of the glass. Amused smile—slightly contemptuous, but slightly pitying. He rehearsed two or three effects, and Gardini, entering the room noiselessly, retreated badly shaken. Mercifully Sir Edward had not seen him, and after a quick drink to restore his nerves he gave a short cough and returned.

"Are you ready, sir, for your mail ?" he asked deferentially.

Sir Edward reseated himself.

"In a minute or two," he said. "I like this stuff, Benito !"

The secretary breathed more freely ; "Benito" evenings were all right ; "Gardini" ones were a toss up ; "you damned infernal idiot" ones distinctly trying.

"I think it's very good, Sir Edward," he agreed. "It's got punch in it ; the action is rapid ; and the love interest holds one"

Sir Edward snorted contemptuously.

"Far too much of it," he cried. "I shall speak to Hardcastle about that. Some of it might be cut, and the part in the office in Paris where Sir John is making up his mind whether to crush Bassonia or not should, I think, be considerably strengthened."

'Perhaps so, sir," said the other, tactfully. "Of course, one has to remember that the film-going public insist on having love, and you won't have a success unless you give it to them."

At which point the reader will guess that the document was not concerned with the flight of the dollar, but was a brief scenario of the film being made at the Blackwater studio. But what the reader will find a little difficult to understand is why the said scenario should have found its way into the hands, and the interested hands, of a man like Sir Edward Greatorex. And to make that clear it is necessary to reveal a secret, jealously guarded save from the very few, of Sir Edward's mentality.

MOST male children have yearned passionately to drive a railway engine ; to be a drum major. And since most male children do none of these things in later life presumably, the yearning ceases with advancing years.

In Sir Edward's case, however, the yearning had been a different one and had not ceased. From the moment when he had first seen Douglas Fairbanks slaying thousands, and had watched Charlie Chaplin's magic feet twinkling over the screen, he had had but one real ambition, beside which a few odd millions more or less counted for nothing at all. And that ambition had been to play a leading part in a big film.

A strong and silent *rôle* was what he passionately desired to play : a great statesman, calm and unruffled, steering the national ship through troubled waters ; a great surgeon with life and death in his steady hand ; a great financier with the destinies of hundreds in his control. A rugged and even ruthless type of part was what he saw himself in.

Now beyond question, had he so wished, he could have gratified his desire at any time. With a week's income he could have bought studios, camera men, authors, and even bribed the public to come and see the result. But two things prevented him. The first was a certain diffidence caused by the thought that it was just possible he might not be quite so successful as, say, John Barrymore ; the second was the question of the money involved. It would cost a lot, and that was as gall and wormwood to the soul of Edward Greatorex. And so, but for a strange turn of the wheel, his secret ambition would, in all probability, have remained a secret till his death.

It had occured six months previously, when he was taking the waters at Baden. Seated next to him one day in the lounge was an extremely pretty woman ; and though he liked to pose as a misogynist, in reality he was far from being one. And when she dropped her handkerchief, he retrieved it for her.

It transpired that her name was Madame Saumur, who was staying there with a great friend, the Comtessa Bartelozzi, and for the next few days he was frequently with either one or the other. Indeed, so

charming did he find them both that his secretary was amazed at his expansiveness. Now it happened one evening that in the course of the conversation a film showing at one of the local cinemas was under discussion. And in criticizing the performance, Sir Edward delivered himself of some scathing comments on the actor playing the principal *rôle*.

"Had I been playing it," he remarked, "I should have given a totally different rendering. His conception of the part was all wrong."

Madame Saumur paused in the act of lighting a cigarette.

"Have you ever done any film work, Sir Edward?" she asked.

"My dear lady," he answered with a tolerant smile. "I'm afraid my life has been too busy for frivolities of that sort. At the same time, had it been cast along different lines, I feel moderately confident that my name would not have been entirely unknown."

"I'm sure of it," she said, quietly. "Why don't you try in your spare time?"

He waved the suggestion away with an indulgent hand. Not even to this lovely creature would he admit that her suggestion was one that had obsessed him for years. But as the days passed she returned to the subject more than once.

"I'm in earnest, Sir Edward," she said. "I have some knowledge of film requirements myself, and I have been studying your features. And I believe that for certain *rôles* you possess a marvellous film face."

Again he waved a deprecating hand, but it was clear that he was not displeased at the idea.

"Now I am going to make a suggestion to you," she continued. "I have an American friend—a Mr. Hardcastle—who is coming here in a day or two and staying a week. He is closely in touch with the film business, and, what is far more important, he could give you a candid and truthful opinion at once. Not that it would be of more than academic interest," she added. "Naturally to a man like yourself such a matter is too trivial. But all the artist in me cries out in protest against features such as yours being wasted."

And Sir Edward was even less displeased. Most certainly as a matter of academic interest he would be delighted to hear Mr. Hardcastle's unbiased opinion. The trouble was that Mr. Hardcastle's opinion would have been more unbiased but for an interview which took place before the meeting; an interview at which the financier was not present.

It occurred in Madame Saumur's sitting-room, and speech was frank.

"See here, Tom," she said. "I've got nothing worked out yet, but the details will come later. We've been in this hole a fortnight now sitting in that slob-eyed skate's pocket, and all we've got out of him is an orangeade he forgot to pay for. But he's got a hunch that he can act for the films. It doesn't matter that his face would empty any cinema in a minute; you've got to guy him good and hearty."

"Put me wise, honey, and I'll do what I can," said Hardcastle, amiably.

"You're to be one of the big noises in the American film world," she explained. "A power behind the throne—a man with unrivalled experience in spotting winners for the screen."

"Sounds good to me," he said "What comes next?"

"You've got to give an opinion on his face."

"Suffering Sam!" he cried.

"You've got to tell him that his features fulfil every known requirement for a successful film career. Don't try any funny stuff. He knows he wouldn't beat Ronald Colman in a competition for looks, and he's no fool. Character parts—that's the line to take."

"I get you, honey," said Hardcastle. "Lead me to him."

"And don't forget you're a big noise in America."

"It would be easier to remember that bit if you could part with the equivalent of a ten-dollar bill. I'm broke."

"Here you are, Tom." She pressed some money into his hand. "You go down and take a walk. We'll join up with Sir Edward in the lounge. Then when you come in we'll meet for the first time. Don't rush things; he's a wary bird."

AND twenty minutes later Hardcastle, with a large cigar in the corner of his mouth, entered the hotel. For a few moments he stood looking round him. Then with a sudden start of recognition he crossed to Madame Saumur.

"This is a real pleasure," he remarked, "though not unexpected. Lord Dowingham told me you were here. And you, Comtessa. Well, well—this is bully."

"Mr. Hardcastle, I don't know if you've ever met Sir Edward Greatorex?"

"Put it there, Sir Edward," he said, cordially, holding out his hand. "I have not had that honour, though it would be idle to pretend that I don't know who you are. The penalty of fame, sir; the penalty of fame. Now, may I offer you ladies a little light refreshment?"

"And what have you been doing since I last saw you?" asked Madame Saumur as the waiter departed with an order.

"Trotting around," he said. "I was down in Hollywood for a couple of months."

He turned to Sir Edward.

"My line of business, sir, is a humble one compared to your great interests. I am in the film trade."

"Most interesting, Mr. Hardcastle," said the financier. "And what particular branch of that business? Do you produce?"

"No, sir; at least, not as a general rule. I have produced. Two years ago I did a super film. But my principal line is not that. It's something which very few people know exists."

He leaned forward confidentially.

"Now take this lounge at the present moment. Subconsciously I am taking in everyone's face from the point of view of screen work. There are many very good-looking people, Sir Edward, who are useless for film purposes; others, not so good-looking, would be an instant success. Instinctively when I go into a room I find myself putting everyone I meet into one or other category. And because I don't make a mistake once in a hundred times, I have more or less specialized in that branch. Variety, sir; that's what the public wants. We're looking for new people all the time. Of course there will always be great popular favourites; but they've got to be supported by others. Ladies, your very good health. Sir Edward, I'm pleased to meet you."

"I find you most interesting, Mr. Hardcastle," said the other. "Let us hear your criticisms on the people in this lounge."

Hardcastle shifted his chair slightly so as to get a better view.

"Wal," he said, "there are about forty one can dismiss at once. Ah! wait—here's a good example. You see that pretty girl who has just come in? Good figure; good mover; exactly the type which throngs round studio doors believing they are second Mary Pickfords. Whereas I can see in a moment that that girl would be useless on the screen. It's a gift, Sir Edward, which I happen to possess. Once again—take that rather big, ugly guy over by the door: in certain *rôles* that man would be bully."

"What about me, Mr. Hardcastle?" asked Madame Saumur, with a smile.

"I'll answer you seriously, Madame," he said. "And as a matter of fact here is a very interesting example, Sir Edward, of my job. Take these two ladies: both equally beautiful in their different ways. And yet I say without a shadow of doubt that whereas Madame Saumur would be a success on the screen, the Comtessa would not."

"That's one for me," laughed the Comtessa. "Now we'll put Sir Edward through it. What about him?"

"Sir Edward! Why, he was sorted out in my mind as soon as I saw him." He tapped the table with his finger impressively. "If Sir Edward had not been who he is, and I had happened to meet him nine months ago, it would have saved me weeks of frenzied search. And when I think of what I finally managed to get hold of——"

He lifted despairing hands to heaven.

"No, sir," he continued, quietly, "if you weren't who you are, I should be tempted to make you an offer on the spot. At the most you could only turn it down. You are one of the finest examples of a type that is in great demand, but which for some reason or another is the hardest to find. Film Face! Gee whizz! If ever you lose your money, Sir Edward"—and he laughed heartily at the bare idea—"you just cable Tom Hardcastle, Hollywood. He'll find you your weekly pocket money."

"You really mean that you think I'm suitable, Mr. Hardcastle," said the financier.

"Believe me, Sir Edward, in my profession we get out of the habit of wasting time. And paying compliments to a woman, or telling lies to a man is waste of time. In jest the Comtessa asked me what I thought of you: I've told you. If the necessity arose in your case, you could earn big money—very big money. Wal! I guess I must be getting along. And I hope I may see something of you during the time I'm here."

He bowed to them all and sauntered out of the hotel—a typical, prosperous American business man.

"WHAT did I tell you, Sir Edward?" said Madame Saumur with a smile.

"Undoubtedly a most interesting and intelligent man," he remarked. "I should like to have another talk with him on the subject."

A wish, had he known it, that there was every promise of being fulfilled. The only trouble was that it was a little difficult to decide what the next move was going to be. And at a council of war held that afternoon in Madame Saumur's sitting-room not much progress was made.

"I reckon I played my part pretty well, girls," said Hardcastle. "But for the life of me I don't see what good it's going to do us. We've made that guy believe that his dial bears some resemblance to a face, but where's it lead to? If he went incognito to any studio and asked for a job they'd set the dog on him."

"Doesn't matter, Tom," said Madame Saumur. "We've taken the first step. He's interested in you, and if we can't find some method of making him part we must have lost our cunning. Keep him going. We'll think of something."

"All right, honey," he answered. "I'll do my best. By the way, as I came in there was a man asking for Sir Edward's letters—a foreign-looking chap. Who is he?"

"Gardini—the private secretary. Why?"

Hardcastle shifted his cigar to the other corner of his mouth.

"Watch him," he said, tersely. "I didn't like the look he gave me. Yours truly may know nothing about film faces, but he knows the hell of a lot about ordinary ones. So watch him."

FOR the next three or four days nothing happened, if the inconceivable fact that Sir Edward invited Hardcastle to dinner can be regarded as nothing. But as far as coming to any decision as to how to relieve the financier of any dough, the situation remained unchanged. It became increasingly obvious that the trout had swallowed the fly. Time after time he brought the conversation back to films in general and himself in particular. But at that it stuck, and at that it would have stuck, in all probability for good, but for a very unexpected development.

They were all sitting despondently in Madame Saumur's room one morning when there came a knock at the door and the secretary entered.

"Come right in, Mr. Gardini," said Hardcastle, heartily, but with shrewd eyes fixed intently on the other's face. "Take a seat."

The Italian bowed and sat down.

"I do not propose," he began, "to waste time by beating about the bush. To do so would be an insult to all our mentalities. Let us therefore come to the point. In the first place it was no matter of health that brought any of you here, was it?"

It was not a question. It was a statement, and no one bothered to reply.

"I admit," he continued, "that when Mr. Hardcastle first came on the scene I was deceived. You ladies, if I may be forgiven for saying so, were comparatively easy; there was nothing original about you. But Mr. Hardcastle was different. However, being of an inquiring turn of mind, I cabled a man I know very well in Los Angeles, who is one of the big people there. Here is his answer."

He produced it from his pocket.

"'Never heard of the man in my life.' Once again," he continued with a smile, "I will not insult your intelligence by asking you to what question that is an answer. All I want to know is what you are hoping to get out of it?"

And suddenly Hardcastle lay back in his chair and roared with laughter. Nothing criminal had been done; he could afford to laugh. And the humour of the situation struck him.

"That's all *we* want to know, Mr. Gardini," he said.

"Then you have no plan?" said the other, puzzled.

"Devil a one," cried Hardcastle. It was just a chance shot, and it doesn't really matter that you're wise to it, because as far as I can see nothing could ever have come of it."

"Then, my dear Mr. Hardcastle," said the Italian, softly, "you are not as clever a man as I thought you to be."

An instant silence settled on the room, and the three of them stared at the secretary. What was he driving at?

"I don't quite get you, Mr. Gardini," said Hardcastle, quietly. "You are presumably acting in Sir Edward's interests."

And the answer came before the Italian spoke a word. For there flashed over his face a look of such diabolical hatred as only a Southerner can give. There was murder in it—murder by torture: and the American whistled under his breath.

"In his interests?" hissed the other. "If I could see him lying dead at my feet, knowing that I had killed him, I would dance on his body."

"Is that so?" remarked Hardcastle, genially. "Have a drink, and tell us all about it."

"For months he has treated me like a dog," snarled the other, "generally in front of other people. And I, because I have no money, must put up with it."

"Quite so," said the American, soothingly. "But shall we get to the point? Now are we to understand that you have some scheme in your head which is likely to part Sir Edward from a considerable wad of money?"

"I have," answered the other quietly. "And if you listen to me I will tell it to you."

"Fire ahead," said Hardcastle.

And when, ten minutes later, the Italian had finished, the eyes of his audience were gleaming with excitement.

"It's genius," cried the American. "Sheer genius. Gardini—you're wasted."

"There are many details still to be thought out," said the secretary, "but we have plenty of time. I would suggest that you approach him as soon as possible, but wait for a sign from me that he is in a good temper. For on this first step rests everything. And then, my friends, if that is successful we shall know what to do. You working at your end, and I at mine will, between us, get that devil where he has put so many others, in the dust."

And with a gloating look of anticipation in his eyes Benito Gardini left the room.

"You're right, Tom," said the Comtessa as the door closed; "it's sheer genius. But can we pull it off?"

"We can have a damned good shot at it, my dear," he answered. "You'd better let me put it up to Greatorex first as a business proposition."

It was after dinner that same night that the secretary gave Hardcastle a meaning glance which told him that the moment was propitious. The millionaire was in the lounge enjoying a cup of coffee, and as the American halted by his table he smiled.

"Come and join me, Mr. Hardcastle," said Sir Edward Greatorex, affably. "Where are the two charming ladies?"

"Playing bridge, I think."

He pulled up a chair and sat down

"And I am rather glad they are, Sir Edward," he continued, "because I should like the pleasure of a few minutes' private conversation with you. For the last two or three days I have been turning over in my mind a certain idea, and with your permission I would like to put if before you. I may say at once that it is connected with film work."

The slight frown that had been gathering on the financier's forehead disappeared.

"Now we are both men who are accustomed to come to the point at once, so I will do so now. Does the thought of playing a big part in a story I have in mind appeal to you at all? Wait a moment, Sir Edward, before you reply. My reason for asking a man of your great wealth and position is a simple one. It is solely a question of art. You fulfil my conception of this part in a way that no one else can, at least no one else that I have yet met. And it occurred to me that it might amuse you, in the same way that amateur theatricals amuse some people, to act this *rôle*. It would be an experience, if nothing else, and the whole thing could be arranged to suit your convenience as far as time is concerned."

"It is a matter that requires careful thought, Mr. Hardcastle," said the other. "You will readily appreciate that a man in my position has to be very careful what he does."

Not a muscle in Hardcastle's face moved, but he knew the fish was rising.

"Naturally, Sir Edward," he remarked. "And those points would all have to be considered. But before wasting time over that the thing I would like to know is whether—always provided they can be settled satisfactorily—you would be prepared to act the part."

"I think I may say," said the millionaire after a pause, "that, subject to my other manifold interests not being interfered with, I would be prepared to do so."

Hardcastle lit a cigar. The fish was hooked.

(To be continued.)

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The January "STRAND Magazine"

will contain

A NEW COMPLETE STORY

by

RUDYARD KIPLING

entitled

"BEAUTY SPOTS"

Other contributors will include Valentine Williams, Agatha Christie, Beverley Nichols, and A. J. Alan

PUZZLES ROUND THE YULE-LOG FIRE

IT was a tradition among the Askham-Bests that the hour after dinner on Christmas night should be devoted to setting puzzles to each other, each member of the party contributing his little mite. "Yes, that's our motto, 'After dinner, test a while,'" said Mr. Askham-Best, who always loved his little joke. And so, most of the members of the family had been wearing for some days the furrowed brows which were the outward sign of the furious thinking within, but one or two—particularly Tom—trusted to a last-minute inspiration. Perhaps I ought to tell you first who were the *dramatis personæ*—or should I say the *problematis personæ?*

No one entered into the fun with more quiet enjoyment than Grandmamma Best, a dear, sweet soul, whose dress and manner carried with them a faint fragrance of lavender. Then there were Mr. and Mrs. Askham-Best, their eldest son, Tom, who had ambitions to play golf for his 'Varsity, their daughter, Winifred, who had recently become engaged to Jack Torring (who was also present and in such a state of cheerful happiness that he only grinned amiably when young Jim, the youngest of the Askham-Bests, insisted on describing him as Win's *financé*). Uncle Mortimer, without whom Christmas would not seem like Christmas at all, completed the party.

The order of going was decided by lot, and when Tom's name was drawn first out of the hat, he confessed that up to that very morning he had not thought of a puzzle. But fortunately he noticed, during a round of golf before lunch, that the figures on one of the tee-boxes had some interesting characteristics. "You know," he said, "that our boxes are marked with the number of the hole, the length in yards, and the bogey figure for the hole. The box at the first hole, for instance, is marked thus——" (writing the figures down)

1
4 8 7
5

"Now, if I represent the figures on the tee-box at a certain hole by letters, like this :—

A
B C D
E

I can give you some facts about them which will make it possible for you to discover the figures for which the letters stand. I noticed that :—

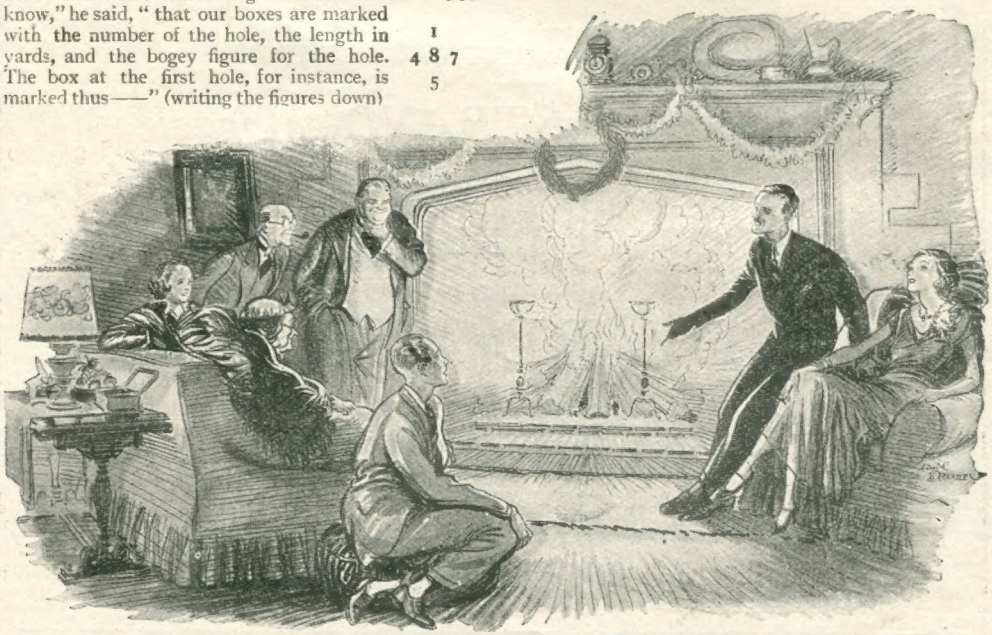
C+E, B+C+E, B+D, A+B, and D+E were consecutive numbers in an ascending order: and that A×D×E gave the middle line."

There was some furious working with pencils for a few minutes, but it was not long before Jim triumphantly produced the correct answer.

When Mrs. Askham-Best's turn came, she said she was afraid she hadn't anything very novel to offer. Perhaps they wouldn't mind an old-fashioned word-ladder. "We'll simply love it," they said. "Very well, then," she replied, "I want you to change SLOW into FAST, altering only one letter at a time, and making an ordinary English word at each step."

The problem, of course, was to make the change in as few steps as possible. Now, though everybody present succeeded in making the transformation, some of their ladders were rather long. Two of the party made the change in six moves, and it was the general opinion that this could not be improved upon.

(*Continued overleaf.*)



WHEN Grandmamma was called on, she said: "Dear Queen Victoria was very fond of amusing herself with jumbled words, as you perhaps know, and I love to think I am like her in one thing at least. For I, too, get a great deal of entertainment from a box of letters. I am especially fond of anagrams, and so I've been trying to make a few just to puzzle you a little. I've made some out of the names of pantomimes we see at this time of the year, and I've included the words so formed in several sentences, one pantomime hidden in each sentence. The words, either two or three, that form the anagram, always come together in the sentences. I am afraid they are not very good, but perhaps the task will keep you busy for a few minutes." And then she read out these sentences :—

1. I do dislike seeing a lad recline on a settee when his elders are sitting on hard chairs.

2. The load is so heavy that the bus soon tips over.

3. You must raise the receiver, listen for the right tone, and dial.

4. His quick temper explains his bad relations with his employers.

It *did* keep them busy for quite a time, but the sentences yielded up their secrets at last. Two words from the first sentence had to be used, three from the second, two from the third, and three from the fourth. Grandmamma was quite pleased, but I think she was still more pleased when they quite failed to solve another little problem she set them. "I wonder," she said, "if any of you can make a single word out of 'GROWS IN DEAL.'" They shuffled and re-shuffled the letters. "I've got 'genial words' out of it," said one. "'O weird slang' is the best I can get," said another. But no one arrived at a single word, and when Grandmamma told them how to do it, the laugh was entirely with her.

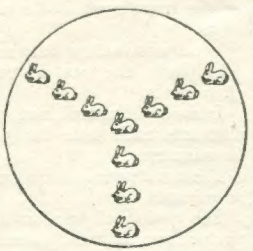
"It's strange how stupid we can be," said Mr. Askham-Best. "Only yesterday at the club a man challenged me to give him a common English word of four letters which ended in ENY, and, do you know, though I went right through the alphabet, I couldn't find one for the life of me." But his listeners were more wide awake, and several gave him the required word.

"All right, then," said Mr. Askham-Best. "That one was too easy. Let's see what you can make of this :—

"Rhoda and her sister Sibyl are typists who both work in my office. They leave their home every morning at nine, and arrive simultaneously at the scene of their labours. Rhoda cycles all the way, and Sibyl goes half way by 'bus at sixteen miles an hour, walking the rest at four miles an hour. How fast does Rhoda ride ?"

For some time there was nothing heard but the sound of feverish scribbling, and Tom it was who first produced the correct answer.

When it came to Winifred's turn, she said, "My problem is only a small affair of drawing. Here it is. There were ten rabbits in a circular field, and they happened to be in a kind of Y formation, like this :—



"Now, can you draw three more circles so that every rabbit is in a little compartment by itself ?"

The supply of compasses was limited, but with the aid of pennies, and of half-crowns (borrowed from Uncle Mortimer), the rabbits were duly isolated.

APPROPRIATELY enough, it was Jack Torring's turn next. "I have an eccentric habit," he said, "of adding up the figures in any collection of numbers that comes under my observation. For instance, I have never yet been in church without adding up the numbers on the hymn-boards. Well, you remember the little earthquake we had a few months ago. On that Saturday night—or rather Sunday morning—I was returning home on my motor-cycle, when my petrol supply gave out owing to a leak in the tank. As it was then well after midnight, and I was ten miles from anywhere, I looked about for some place to spend the night. A large rambling house, obviously untenanted, with several broken windows on the ground floor, afforded easy entrance and the shelter I required. I ascended to the first floor, which seemed likely to be less draughty. This floor had no fewer than nine rooms, each door bearing a metal number, but the numbers ran in a strangely disordered sequence. Thus 7 followed 3, and next came 1. I made a complete tour of inspection with my electric torch, adding the door-numbers as I went. I had just decided to take up my quarters in No. 2, which contained a dilapidated armchair, when there was a dull, rumbling sound, and the house shook violently, a large portion of No. 2's ceiling coming down with a crash. I made another round of the rooms (adding the numbers, of course, as usual), and had decided to occupy No. 8, when it suddenly struck me that the total of my last reckoning was greater by three than the previous one. As I pride myself upon never making a mistake in these additions, I was rather puzzled, but a third round, made with very great care, cleared the matter up."

"Your second count was wrong, I suppose," said Mrs. Askham-Best, "owing to your mind being disturbed by the earthquake."

"No, it was right," said Jack.

"And why do you think you went wrong the first time ?" asked Jim.

"I didn't go wrong the first time," replied Jack.

Everyone stared at this. Mr. Askham-Best made a plan of the nine doors, and was proceeding to number them when Winifred suddenly announced that she had solved the mystery.

It was rather felt that Jack ought to give them a more genuine problem, and so he put this question to them :—

"Down by the station, I saw a long, open truck moving steadily along the rails at about ten miles per hour ; a chap standing on it at the back was holding a pig, and the pig was struggling to get at an apple that someone had balanced on the front of the truck. Then the pig got loose and made a bee-line for the apple, fairly grunting with glee. How would that—not the grunting, of course !—affect the pace of the truck ?"

Opinions differed about this, but Jack, as a budding engineer, was able to decide the point with authority.

Young Jim, who had been impatiently waiting his turn, was an enthusiastic Scout.

"The little problem I am going to put to you," he said, "cropped up in camp. The Scoutmaster called two chaps up to him.

"'Here, you two,' said the Scoutmaster, 'each of you fill one of these two 4½ gallon casks from that

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stream over there. Mind you fill them right up to the brim!'

"Jobson selected a can holding 2½ quarts, and Flete took a jug that held 1½ quarts; and off they started for the stream. Jobson made three journeys there and back every five minutes, while Flete, who had a lighter load, went there and back in a minute.

"Which filled his cask first, and how much longer did the other take to complete the job?"

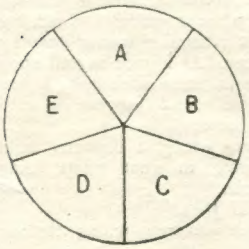
Jim could hardly wait while the party tackled the problem with pencils and paper before he fired off another at them:—

"If a sheet of stamps (without a margin) consists of ten rows with twelve stamps in each row, how many tears will be needed to detach all the stamps one at a time? To make the meaning of 'tear' clear, two tears will be required to detach a corner stamp, or three, if we begin with a stamp in the middle of the row.

"Now, if you've managed to solve this simple problem, let's suppose that some out-of-the-way State issues a borderless sheet of stamps with one hundred and fifty-three rows, each containing two hundred and seventy-eight stamps. How many tears would be required to detach the stamps, one at a time?"

This kept them busy for some time.

IT fell to Uncle Mortimer to put his problem next. He promptly produced eleven counters and a circular cardboard box divided into five compartments. "I want you," he said, "to apportion the counters among the compartments in such a way that if we go round the box in a clockwise direction the number of counters in each successive division is nearer 5 than that in the preceding one. Thus, if I put two in A, three in B, and four in C, I am fulfilling the conditions, but how am I to dispose of the remaining two?"



After a few attempts had been made to get the desired distribution, it was declared to be impossible. Uncle Mortimer, challenged to perform the feat himself, gave a solution which, though it satisfied the conditions, involved him in temporary disgrace.

And though by this time it was getting late, and Mrs. Askham-Best was thinking in terms of hot-water bottles, it was unanimously agreed that Uncle Mortimer should pay a forfeit in the form of another—and final puzzle. He assented with the greatest readiness, but there was an impenitent glint in his eye which suggested that he was up to some mischief or other. "I want you all," he said, "to number off the letters in the name of our kitchen-maid, like this:—

N	E	L	L	Y		S	I	M	O	N
0	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9

"Now, take any number you like, of three figures, such that the first figure exceeds the third by more than one; from this number subtract the number formed by reversing the figures; then reverse the figures of the result; next add; multiply the result by 20."

Of course, they all worked independently. Here, for instance, were Grandmamma's figures:—

743
347
396
693
1,089
20
21,780

"Have you all finished?" asked Uncle Mortimer. "Very well, then. Now see what are the letters to which your figures correspond."

There were howls of laughter when everyone said: "The answer is a lemon!"

As a matter of fact, the explanation is quite simple, and readers will find it, together with the solutions to all the other problems, in next month's STRAND MAGAZINE.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

1,076.—FOR YOUR EDIF-ICATION.

D E I F I E D
E E . . . E E
I . I . I . I
F . . F . . F
I . I . I . I
E E . . . E E
D E I F I E D

The word appears twelve times because "Deified" reads the same backwards as forwards.

1,077.—COMPANY'S REGULATIONS.

LET x minutes = time taken one way.

Then ordinary single fare in pence $= 2\frac{1}{2}x$

And ordinary return fare $= 5x$

Cost of 5 ordinary returns $= 25x$

Cost of 8 singles $= 20x$

Fees to dummy passengers $= \frac{2x}{60} \times 3 \times 15$ pence $= \frac{3x}{2}$ pence.

$\therefore$ net saving in pence $= 5x - \frac{3x}{2} = \frac{7x}{2}$

But this = 560 pence. $\therefore x = 160$

$\therefore$ speed of train $= \frac{132 \times 60}{160} = 49\frac{1}{2}$ m.p.h.

1,078.—WINDING TIME.

BETWEEN the hours of 4 and 5, the obstruction of the minute hand begins at 4.22 and ends at 4.25. But the hour hand has already begun to obstruct at 4.24, and continues to do so for 3 minutes × 12 = 36 minutes. Therefore in this hour, either the minute or the hour hand is obstructing one hole from 4.22 to 5.

Total obstruction between 4 and 5 = 38 minutes.

Similarly, the total obstruction between 7 and 8 = 38 minutes.

In each of the remaining ten hours, the minute hand obstructs each hole for 3 minutes, making in all, 60 minutes.

The total period of obstruction is, therefore, 2 hours 16 minutes.

The period of freedom from obstruction in every twelve hours is, thus, 9 hours 44 minutes.